

AJET

CONNECT

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

SEPTEMBER
2018

Save Up That Hard-Earned Yen - Budgeting Tips for JETs

Five Years Without AC - A Fifth Year's Advice on Beating the Heat

Japanese Workplace Fashion - Bending (Not Breaking) The Rules

Voluntourism In Ehime - Traveling with A Purpose

Becoming the Tengu Of Gion - One ALT's Festival Story



**The Japanese Lifestyle & Culture
Magazine Written by the International
Community in Japan**

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome back: to Japan, to work, and to this year's very first regular issue of *CONNECT*!

I hope your summer vacation was exactly what you needed to refuel, whether full of thrilling discovery or lazy days below the aircon with only-in-Japan Häagen-Dazs in reach. Summer in Japan is truly special. I don't know about you, though, but I have a soft spot for autumn.

In a lot of ways, this month will be more of the nonstop craziness we all come to love about life here. September brings the return (or beginning) of classes, school festivals and sports day prep. But it's also a great time to reflect. The air is cooling down a little (if you believe it, you can make it so), and with the last of the *natsubate* draining away, I'm excited for the year ahead. For JETs new and old, autumn can be the perfect chance to take a deep breath and start mapping out the next 12 months. Who do you want to be, what do you want to do, and how can you make a difference to the community around you?

Each month, we at *CONNECT* will do our best to spark some inspiration. Whether you're looking for travel tips (check out our top app recommendations to get started) or fashion tips for the Japanese workplace - there's something for you in every issue.

Happy reading, and have a great month!

Lauren Hill
Head Editor
3rd Year Tokyo ALT



Photo: Kirsty Broderick



LETTER FROM THE AJET CHAIR

Greetings and felicitations!

I would like to congratulate all our incoming JET Participants. The application is difficult, the wait is excruciating, and the flight is long and generally sleepless. But, against the odds, you're here! You made it.

The JET Programme has a 30 year history, and now you are a part of our story. You'll meet new people, have incredible new experiences, and learn things about yourself you never would have otherwise. It's an exciting – and sometimes stressful – experience.

As you arrive, you'll begin to settle in and adjust to make the best out of your life in Japan. You'll start at your new school(s), meet coworkers, and adjust to day-to-day living here. For many of us, that transition can have bumps. This is a normal part of the experience, and one every JET participant and alumnus understands. What's important to remember is that we are an incredibly strong community, and look out for each other. If you're a recontracting JET, remember to reach out to our newer members. And for those just coming in, our community is wonderful and vibrant and passionate. You may find friends and supporters in many places – in your prefectural AJET, your community of expatriates, or one of our many SIGs, such as JETs of African Descent, Hola! JETS, Stonewall Japan, and many others.

You're embarking on a great and wonderful adventure here in Japan, and I wish you all the best of luck.

Best wishes,

Rachel Boellstorff
AJET Chair
3rd Year Okayama ALT



Photo: Ashley Hirasuna



NEWS AND EVENTS

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Tresha Barrett

"The eternal stars shine out again, so soon as it is dark enough." Thomas Carlyle

EVENTS EDITOR

connect.events@ajet.net

Peyton Goodman

Go out there and "kick names and take butts"! -Mantis from Avengers: Infinity War

Photo: Colette English



Events Calendar:

September

Block 1

Hokkaido
Aomori
Iwate
Akita

Block 2

Miyagi
Yamagata
Fukushima
Niigata

Block 3

Ibaraki
Tochigi
Gunma
Saitama
Nagano

Block 4

Chiba
Tokyo
Kanagawa
Yamanashi
Shizuoka

Block 5

Toyama
Ishikawa
Fukui
Gifu
Aichi

Block 6

Shiga
Kyoto
Hyogo

Block 7

Mie
Osaka
Nara
Wakayama

Block 8

Tokushima
Kagawa
Ehime
Kochi

Block 9

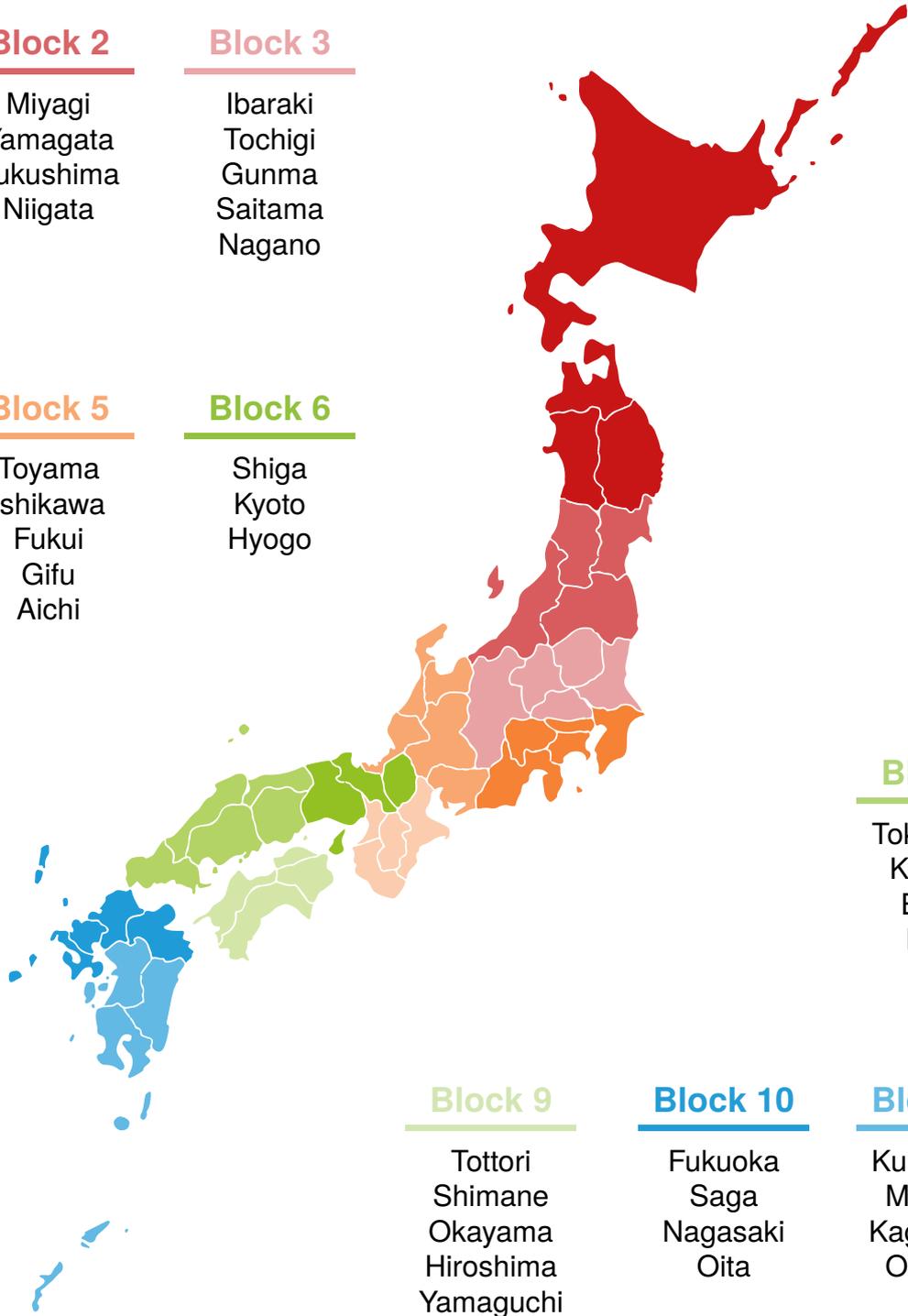
Tottori
Shimane
Okayama
Hiroshima
Yamaguchi

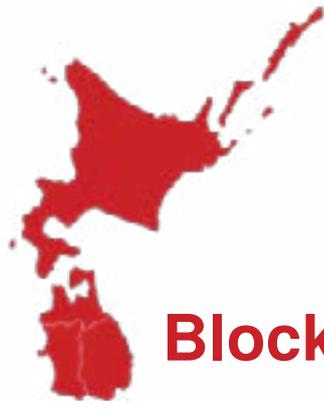
Block 10

Fukuoka
Saga
Nagasaki
Oita

Block 11

Kumamoto
Miyazaki
Kagoshima
Okinawa





Block 1

Shirase / Antarctic Fair

01 September
Nikaho City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Kushiro Ramen Festival “Ra Festa 2018”

01 September – 02 September
Kushiro city, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English only](#)

Sasako Tsukiyama Shrine Festival

01 September – 02 September
Yurihonjo City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Hanamaki Festival

07 September – 09 September
Hanamaki city, Iwate prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Sapporo Autumn Festival

07 September – 30 September
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc](#)

The 31st Oogori Festival

08 September
Noshiro city, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Moerenuma Artistic Fireworks

08 September
Sapporo City, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, etc](#)

Ichinoseki Pottery Festival

08 September – 10 September
Ichinoseki City, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

The 34th Memorial Xishi Healthy Marathon

09 September
Yurihonjo City, Akita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Saki's Village Marathon Tournament

09 September
Morioka city, Iwate prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)

Misawa Air Base Festival in Aomori

09 September
Misawa City, Aomori Prefecture
[Website in English only](#)

Tono Festival

15 September – 16 September
Tōno city, Iwate prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

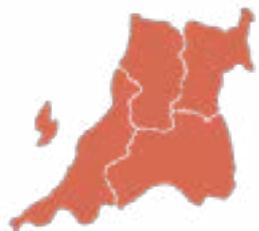
Ishikari Salmon Festival

22 September – 23 September
Ishikari City, Hokkaido Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Ikeashi Music Festival 2018

24 September
Morioka City, Iwate Prefecture
[Website in Japanese only](#)





Block 2



Block 3

Imoni Festival (The Biggest in Japan)
02 September
Yamagata city, Yamagata Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Prince Masamune Festival
08 September – 09 September
Osaki city, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Chinese, and Korean](#)

Sagae Matsuri
09 September – 16 September
Sagae City, Yamagata Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Sendai Oktoberfest
13 September – 24 September
Sendai city, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Niigata Soh-Odori Festival
15 September – 17 September
Niigata city, Niigata prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Toyoma Autumn Festival
15 September – 16 September
Tome city, Miyagi Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Machiya Folding Screen Festival
15 September – 15 October
Murakami city, Niigata Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Aizu Festival
22 September – 24 September
Aizuwakamatsu City, Fukushima Prefecture
[Website in English Only](#)

National New Fireworks Festival
01 September
Suwa city, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English only](#)

Dosukoi Pear (Sumo event)
02 September
Chikusei city, Ibaraki Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Keyaki Beer Festival in Autumn 2018
05 September – 09 September
Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture
[Website in English only](#)

Nippon no Hibiki 2018 (Japan Traditional Music Festival)
08 September
Soka city, Saitama prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Hakuba International Trails
09 September
Hakuba village, Nagano Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)



Block 4

Hitokotonushi Shrine Autumn Festival

13 September and 15 September
Joso city, Ibaraki Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Ikaho Festival

18 September – 20 September
Shibukawa city, Gunma Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Matsumoto Castle Moon Viewing Party

19 September – 24 September
Matsumoto City, Nagano Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Tenryu River Whitewater Festival

22 September – 23 September
Iida city, Nagano Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Mother Farm Summer Festival

07 July – 02 September
Futtsu city, Chiba Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Jumpin' Amazing Summer 2018

14 July – 30 September
Shimoda city, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)

EXTRA HOT and DELICIOUS 2018 (Spicy Food Festival)

21 August – 17 September
Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Hassaku Festival

01 September
Tsuru city, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Russian Ballet Gala 2018

01 September – 02 September
Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Ebisu Beer Festival 2018

14 September – 24 September
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

Baycamp 2018 (Outdoor Music Festival)

08 September
Kawasaki City, Kanagawa prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Afro–American–Caribbean FESTA 2018

08 September – 09 September
Shibuya-ku, Tokyo Prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

Simada-mage Matsuri

16 September
Shimada city, Shizuoka Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Kofu Resort Jam

22 September – 24 September
Kofu city, Yamanashi Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)



Block 5

Will-o'-the-Wisp Festival

01 September

Hida city, Gifu Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Hassaku Orange Festival

01 September

Kaga city, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Etchu-Yatsuo Owara Kaze no Bon

01 September – 03 September

Toyama city, Toyama Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Hassaku Festival

02 September

Hiruga, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

JAPAN OPERA FESTIVAL 2018(Open-Air Opera in Nagoya)

08 September – 15 September

Nagoya city, Aichi Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Obama Autumn Festival

15 September – 16 September

Obama city, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

All Japan Gyoza Festival

15 September – 17 September

Nagakude city, Aichi prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

Karatoyama Ritual (Sumo)

25 September

Hakui city, Ishikawa Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Takefu Chrysanthemum Doll Festival 2018

28 September – 04 November

Echizen city, Fukui Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)



Block 6

Kiyomizu Temple Seiryu-e Dragon Festival

14 September – 15 September

Kyoto city, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

Kyoto International Manga Anime Fair 2018

15 September – 16 September

Kyoto city, Kyoto Prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

The 36th Himeji-jo Castle Moon- Viewing Party

24 September

Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)





Block 7

Danjiri Matsuri

15 September – 16 September
Osaka city, Osaka prefecture

[Website in English Only](#)

Asuka Light Corridor Festival

22 September – 23 September
Asuka Village, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Ikoma Light Festival

23 September
Ikoma City, Nara prefecture

[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Uneme Festival

24 September
Nara City, Nara Prefecture

[Website in English only](#)

Ramen Girls Festival Osaka

27 September – 02 October
Osaka city, Osaka prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Kudoyama Art Week

29 September- 14 October
Kudoyama-cho, Wakayama Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)



Block 8

Tokushima Jazz Week

25 August – 02 September
Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Sunset Platform Concert 33

01 September
Iyo city, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean](#)

2018 Memories of Summer Vacation Festival

01 September – 02 September
Utazu City, Kagawa Prefecture

[Website in Japanese](#)

Chibuko no Maya Festival

08 September
Imabari City, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean](#)

Shishin Hachiman Shrine Festival

22 September
Kaiyo city, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese](#)

The 31st Nakayama Chestnut Festival

23 September
Iyo City, Ehime Prefecture

[Website in Japanese, English, Chinese, and Korean](#)

Shikoku Broadcasting Festival

29 September – 30 September
Itano city, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese](#)

Machi ★ Asobi (Anime/Cosplay)

22 September – 06 October
Tokushima City, Tokushima Prefecture

[Website in Japanese](#)





Block 9

Sekishu Washi Uchiwa Art Exhibition

21 July – 02 September
Hamada city, Shimane Prefecture
[Website in English only](#)

Wind Festival

01 September
Shimonoseki city, Yamaguchi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Fire Festival

01 September
Onomichi City, Hiroshima Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Mitsuishi light town

08 September
Bizen city, Okayama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Street Festival ART IN SHOO

08 September – 09 September
Katsuo city, Okayama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Kamijima Tenjin Festival

15 September – 16 September
Kasaoka city, Okayama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

The 2nd Sake Sanpo

16 September
Kurayoshi city, Tottori Prefecture
[Website only in English](#)

Iwakuni Gun Corps Training Demonstration

02, 16, 30 September
Iwakuni city, Yamaguchi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Kamihara Shrine Children's Sumo Tournament

28 September
Kagamino town, Okayama Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Mima Lantern Night Festival

29 September
Mimaki city, Yamaguchi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Costume Festival and Parade

29 September – 30 September
Onomichi city, Hiroshima Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Ohatake Shudo Festival

30 September
Yanai city, Yamaguchi Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)



Block 10

Nagasaki Kyoryu Matsuri

15 September – 16 September
Nagasaki city, Nagasaki Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Karaage Festival

15 September -16 September
Nakatsu city, Oita Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

World Heritage Stage at Munakata Shrine

15 September – 17 September
Munakata City, Fukuoka Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Nagasaki Goto Islands Marathon

22 September
Kamishima city, Nagasaki Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Kunigami Village

Okinawa Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Meiji Restoration 150th Anniversary 4th Jinjiang Bay Seaside Festa

01 September – 02 September
Kagoshima city, Kagoshima Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Urumaichi Eisa Festival

07 September – 09 September
Uruma city, Okinawa Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Shiranui Festival (Fireworks and Marine Bioluminescence Show)

9 September
Uki city, Kumamoto Prefecture
[Website in English and Japanese](#)

Nishinomiya Shrine Usuko Dance

10 September
Saito City, Miyazaki Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Minami-Daito Village

22 September – 23 September
Minamidaitōjima Island, Okinawa Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Izes River Fireworks Show

29 September
Miyazaki city, Miyazaki Prefecture
[Website in Japanese Only](#)

Ichigaki Hot Spring Festival

29 September – 30 September
Ibusuki City, Kagoshima Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Ibusuki City Fireworks Festival

30 September
Ibusuki City, Kagoshima Prefecture
[Website in English, Japanese, Korean, and Chinese](#)

Photos:

Colette English
Gina Whitney
Gina Whitney
Colette English
Kirsty Broderick

Block 11



In The News

August 2018

Tresha Barrett (Kyoto)



Tokyo Medical University Lowers Entrance Exam Scores for Female Applicants

It has recently come to light that Tokyo Medical University lowered the entrance exam scores of female applicants for its School of Medicine. The university admitted to reducing the test results of female applicants by 20 to 30 percent while inflating their male counterparts' scores by a similar margin. The unethical practice, which is said to have begun in 2006, was intended both to reduce the number of female students and bolster the ratio of males at the school.

This year's General Entrance Exam was undertaken by 2,614 applicants, of which 1,018 (over

40%) were female. The results, however, did not reflect this figure. While 141 men passed the second-stage test, only 30 female applicants were shown to be successful. According to sources, female students face this discrimination due to the belief that pursuing marriage and child rearing responsibilities will cause doctor shortages in affiliated hospitals.

"An entrance examination that is held in a way to discriminate against women should never be tolerated," said Education Minister Yoshimasa Hayashi at a press conference on Thursday, August 9th.

This is not the first time the university has faced harsh criticism in recent years. Earlier this year, two top executives at the school were indicted after an internal probe surrounding a bribery case. Masahiko Usui, former chairman of the university, and Mamoru Suzuki, former president of the university, were charged with illegally admitting the son of a former Education Ministry official to the school in exchange for favoritism.

Source:
<https://bit.ly/2vA9ZTq>

Image Source:
<https://bit.ly/2vA9ZTq>

Hokkaido Police Caught with Pants Down

A Sapporo officer was recently apprehended by Hokkaido Prefectural Police after he exposed himself to several women, including a teenage girl.

According to police, on June 24th at around 1:00 p.m. Yuta Yamao, a 26-year-old sergeant from the Tomakomai Police Station, lowered his pants and underwear to expose himself to roughly five women on a sidewalk in Minami Ward.

At that time Yamao was off duty and visiting his family. He has

since admitted to the allegations of indecent exposure.

“With an officer being tasked with ensuring the safety and security of the citizens of Hokkaido, this occurrence is extremely regrettable,” said Eiichi Otsuji, Chief Inspector of the Hokkaido Prefectural Police. He went on to add, “We will deal with this matter strictly based on the results of investigation.”

Source:

<https://bit.ly/2Mj7s9x>



Japan's Royal Wedding Called Off Over Financial Problems

Princess Mako's proposed marriage to commoner fiancé, Kei Komuro, has been postponed due to an apparent financial dispute within his family.

The parents of the 26-year-old princess informed Kei Komuro's mother of a halt in nuptials until all financial issues have been resolved. According to Kyodo News, Komuro was also asked by the royal parents to present a “life plan,” which would include his future career choice.

Princess Mako had announced her engagement to Komuro, 26, in September last year. The couple, who met at university in Tokyo, later announced that with the Emperor's blessing they would

get married in November of this year. However the young couple's wedding plans were shelved in February due to a “lack of time for preparation.”

“We have come to realise there is a lack of time to make sufficient preparations for various events leading up to our marriage this autumn and our life afterwards. We believe we have rushed various things.” Princess Mako said in a statement.

The announcement which was made by the Imperial Household Agency was soon contradicted by the tabloid media. According to reports, the financial issues surrounding Komuro's family greatly influenced that decision.

Allegedly, the wedding delay is due to a financial dispute between Komuro's mother and her former partner. Komuro's mother had purportedly borrowed money from her former fiancé to finance Kei's education but has not yet made repayments.

According to reports, Prince Akishino had warned (in one of the many face-to-face meetings with Komuro's mother) that her alleged debt may have an impact on their children's future plans.

Source:

<https://bit.ly/2P0dYRa>

Image Source:

<https://bit.ly/2OuTrDf>

Gunma Rescue Helicopter Crashes near Mount Kusatsu-Shirane with Crew of Nine

Janice Malcolm (Kanagawa)



On Friday, August 10th, a Gunma Prefectural Government rescue helicopter crashed in the Eastern Mountains with nine crew members onboard. On Saturday, local authorities confirmed the deaths of all nine passengers.

The transport ministry and local officials had first reported on Friday that only two of the nine crew members were dead. The news release stated that six other passengers in unknown conditions had also been discovered in the mountains, and that one person was unaccounted for. The crash occurred by the town of Nakanojo - near Mount Kusatsu-Shirane.

The helicopter carried a crew of four disaster management officials and five firefighters. The chopper was owned by Gunma prefectural government and operated by Toho Air Service, a Tokyo-based aviation company.

The prefectural government has identified the nine persons killed in the crash. The pilot Noriyuki Amagai, 57, and mechanic Susumu Sawaguchi, 60, were both employees of Toho Air Service. They were part of a prefectural disaster management unit along with Satoshi Ozawa, 44, and Akihiro Oka, 38.

The remaining five were firefighters: Ken Tamura, 47, Yosuke Mizuide, 42, Hidetoshi Shiobara, 42, Hiroshi Kuroiwa, 42, and Masaya Hachisuka, 43.

The crew had been tasked with assessing the trail routes on the prefectural borders of Gunma, Nagano, and Niigata. The borders were scheduled to open to climbers today.

Search operations took place Friday and resumed Saturday morning. The area was entered by approximately 160 rescuers, police officials and Self-Defense Force personnel, all of whom were on foot.

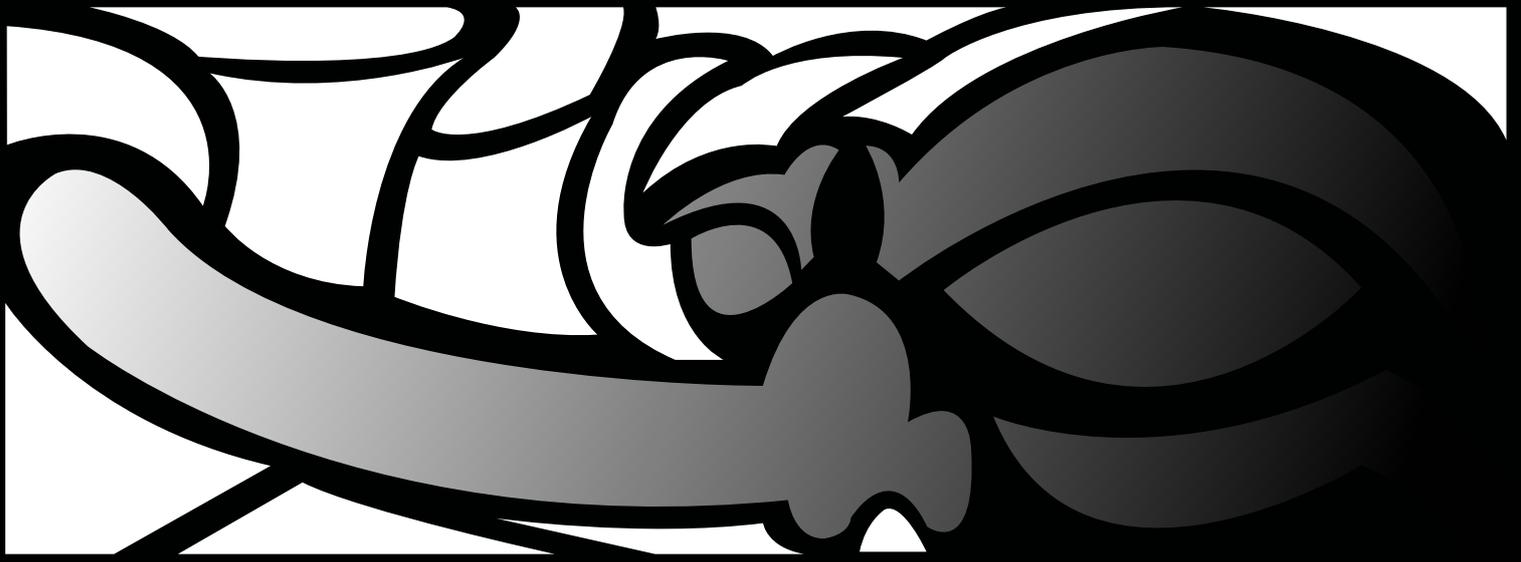
The cause of the crash is not yet known, but eyewitnesses said the helicopter's engine had been making a strange noise and the craft had been flying at a very low altitude. Japan Times reported that a senior prefectural government official commented that the helicopter had been under repair from April to June due to engine trouble.

The chopper, a Bell 412EP, left Maebashi at 9:15 a.m. and was supposed to return at 10:45 a.m. on Friday, August 10th.

Source:
<https://bit.ly/2P1OcMj>
<https://bit.ly/2Onb1sE>

Image Source:
<https://bit.ly/2P1tXyr>

Janice (a.k.a. Harmony) is a young writer in development. She's also a lover of dark spaces, a hopeless optimist, and a homebody filled with wanderlust.



The Tengu of Gion

Sean O'Toole (Oita)

The Gion Festival started in Kyoto in 829 to “appease the gods during an epidemic” (1). Although Kyoto is still the center of the festival, Gion Festival has spread throughout Japan. This article was written by Sean, a former Oita Prefecture JET from Kusu, based on his personal experience at his town’s Gion Festival.

Gion. A special time of the year when cities and towns throughout the country enjoy putting together a festival full of large traditional floats, traditional singing and dancing, and of course, good food. During my time on the JET Program, for three years straight, I was fortunate enough to be part of one of the teams that pull the floats around town. This task involved us being out from 1:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. However, I always saw it as a chance to do something fun with the community, talk with a bunch of students, and drink free beer - which was conveniently carried behind the float throughout the tour.

This year’s Gion was a special one for me. Throughout my years as an ALT, I was also an active member of the town’s community theater group. During my final year, I was given a starring role as a foreign *shinobi* (ninja) that looked like a bit like a *tengu* (a legendary dog-like creature) to the Japanese audience. That gave the head of the

festival a new idea for this year’s Gion. They decided to turn me into *the Tengu of Gion*.

The tengu, which literally translates to ‘Heaven’s dog,’ is a creature that actually looks more like a scary red goblin. The mask I wore had a beaming red face with a nose that probably could have rivaled Pinocchio’s after three or four lies. Despite the odd mask, the clothing was easily the most traditional and extravagant clothing I had ever worn in my life. It was a beautifully bright gold with all sorts of red and white patterns spread over the fine fabric.

The day started with me getting dressed into my tengu costume. The priest then spoke to the gods to allow them into the *omikoshi*, which is a small portable shrine in which the god relaxes and enjoys their ride during the festival. We were then ready to make our exit from the shrine grounds to escort it around the town.

The path we walked along was a set path from many years ago that had remained exactly the same every year. We walked for three days straight for about 4 hours each day. This was all during the heat and humidity of a typical Japanese summer - I knew it would be a long one. We stopped every time somebody had an offering to the god, so that they could pray and so that the priest could give them a





Shinto blessing. The people usually gave offerings, such as fresh fruit or money in order to appease the god.

During the times we stopped, I would usually be approached by some of my students that lived in that area of town. We often stayed out of the sun and laughed as members of the shrine carrying team would find hoses and blast each other with cold water from head to toe.

Throughout the journey, I had mostly been talking to the priest, but at some point I was also approached by one of the three *shinobue* players who allowed me to take a break from the sweat building up under my mask to play the instrument. The *shinobue* is a musical instrument made from bamboo, and it struck me as a cross between a flute and a recorder. Having never played either instrument for the past 20 years of my life, I was obviously skeptical whether or not I could even produce a sound let alone the correct notes. But the generous player assured me that I should just mimic the finger movements of the other two players. It took me a solid ten minutes before I could produce a properly held note, but once that was down, it actually wasn't too much of a problem to figure out. It was as simple as covering the holes to produce consistent notes just as it had been back in elementary school music class. Before I knew it I was even able to flutter notes quite well in the cool ways that these other guys could.

And that was just during the first day! For the second and third days, the leading member of the group brought an extra *shinobue* for me and taught me all sorts of interesting melodic tricks with the instrument.

Despite walking around all day in intense heat as a *tengu*, while wearing incredibly heavy traditional attire, this experience will definitely go down in my book as yet another lifelong memory from the ever ongoing adventure that comes with living in Japan.

Sources

<https://bit.ly/2vleZ8j>

My name is Sean O'Toole. I'm originally from Minneapolis, MN, USA. I completed 4 years on the JET Program from 08/2013 to 08/2017. I then moved to Albany, WA, Australia and was rehired back directly by my previous town Board of Education in Kusu, Oita, Japan. Even though I'm not a JET, I still actively try to fit in every JET event I can throughout the year. One fun fact about me is that I'm currently training up to run the Honolulu Marathon this December.

ARTS AND CULTURE

CULTURE EDITOR

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Nash Sibanda

*I just stamp my inkan on everything I see, right?
Am I doing this correctly?*

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*When we play VR or AR games, our emotions
don't stop. They expand. Our palate for life
evolves.*

Photo: Kirsty Broderick

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Laura Pollacco

*"My mission in life is not merely to survive, but
to thrive; and to do so with some passion, some
compassion, some humor, and some style." -
Maya Angelou*

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Tayla-Paige van Sittert

*If this year had to be an art movement it would
have to be surrealism, because is this year
even really happening? And if it is, do we even
understand it. So much has changed and so
much is strange, isn't it wonderful?*





BENDING *not breaking*

We are aware of how Japanese fashion is presented in Western countries. The street style of Tokyo is famous for its subcultures and strong characters. However, these fashions aren't really the norm for most Japanese people, especially not in the work environment. Japan has a strong work ethic culture, and the way you dress is supposed to emphasise that, to be professional and smart. It can sometimes be a little restrictive, though, for those who like to express themselves through the way they dress, all the more so when we come from countries which are a little more relaxed when it comes to work clothing.

Understandably, we should aim to make sure that we are dressed suitably for our work environment - we have come to this country to work, so we

have to respect that. However, it is also important that we feel like ourselves, that we can in some way express our own sense of style and stand out a little bit. As foreigners, we do sometimes have more flexibility, boundaries we can push that our Japanese counterparts may feel they cannot. After all, part of our work is to share culture, and style is just as important a part of that as anything else. Every JET will have different workplace rules to follow. It is how you make the best of your situation that matters.

In this article, my fellow JETs and I share a few images of the ways we do just that, our small statements that showcase our own sense of style and personality, bending the rules but not breaking them.

SOPHIE LUNN

(Tokyo)

At my Japanese private school, I work with only female students and a majority of female staff. However, I've noticed that many of my colleagues don't like to stand out or wear colors outside the regular neutral colour scheme, and many have said to me, "Oh, I love colour/texture/pattern but I couldn't! It wouldn't suit me."

Personally, I find this a little saddening; I believe everyone should wear things that reflect their personality and soul to their heart's content.

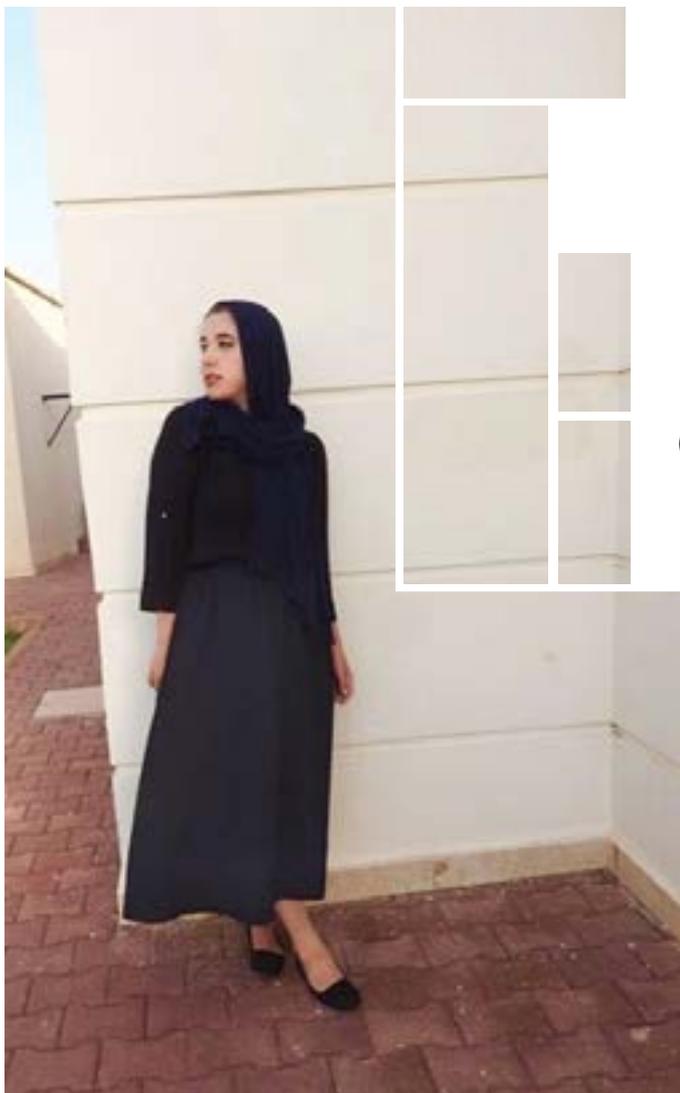
I like to challenge this system by switching up my makeup depending on my mood; wearing bold colours, patterns, or textures in my clothes; and experimenting with different hairstyles. I, too, like a neutral palette, but I always find it fun to wear something outside of the Japanese norm.



KITA YORKE

(Toyama)

Since arriving in Japan, I've never conformed to the white shirt/black pants style. Partly because I don't have a white shirt and partly because I grew up using bright colours and vibrant patterns. Dressing up in colours and patterns just makes me feel happy and comfortable. I've definitely toned down my style in Japan. My outfits have a lot fewer patterns, and when they do have patterns, I usually make sure they are darker shades. If I'm opting to wear bright colours, I'll use the colour blocking method and stick to two or three solid colours. For example, I might wear black pants, a yellow camisole, and a green jacket.



SARA SHAAFI

(Recent Tottori JET Alumnus)

I like to incorporate dark colours (a deep royal blue headscarf with a midnight blue maxi) to give a more rounded, sophisticated look at work. It's hard to stay modest and cool at the same time in the heat of Japan, but an airy outfit like this has saved my life. When I began wearing this outfit after winter, everyone at work commented on how they loved this look, including students. Some of the cheeky ones told me it reminded them of Dementors out of Harry Potter!

NINA TAYLOR

(Tokyo)

When it comes to work wear, I don't really stray from the norm too much. Thankfully my schools are pretty laid back. I have short hair, though, and like to jazz it up a bit with a head scarf — they are really easy to come by, especially in Japan. It's a nice way to add a bit of pattern to an otherwise plain outfit.





LAURA POLLACCO

(Kanagawa)

I love playing around with my style — the way I present myself is very important to me. I hate blending in, so I find Japanese workwear to be a tad constricting and stifling. Everyone in my office pretty much wears white, black, grey, and a few shades of blue. I try to wear brighter and bolder colours, different textures such as satin and wool, different shapes of clothing such as wide legged trousers, and oversized shirts with waistcoats. I enjoy looking professional, but I don't believe it has to be restricted to a set outfit or look.

Expressing yourself is so important, and I try to impress that upon my students, whether it's in their classes or their free time. For me, dressing the way I do is a small part of that. It is a visual reminder to have confidence and to test boundaries.



Home Comforts

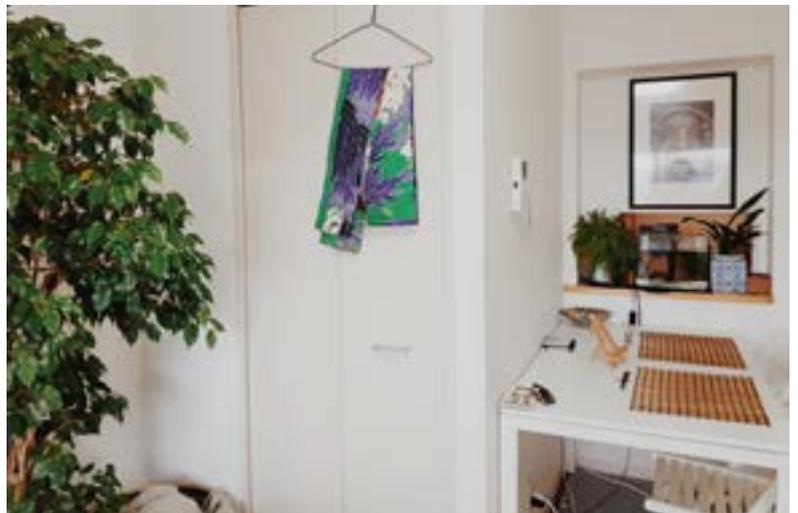
“Home is where the heart is,” or so the saying goes. When we arrive in Japan, we are all in a very similar position. We move into a new apartment or house that we have never stepped foot in before and are told that this will be our home for our time here in Japan. There are some exceptions to this – the vast majority of Tokyo JETs must find their own accommodation – but for most of us we will take over our predecessor’s place or be put in a place chosen by our contracting organisation. Regardless of whether we have one room or more, Japanese style or Western style, we all have to adopt the space as our own.

Doing so in a country that we may be unaccustomed to or feel out of place in at times can be difficult, but our living space is where we go to feel comfortable. It is our space to be ourselves, to feel relaxed, to sleep, eat, and spend a lot of time on Netflix maybe. Having somewhere where we can be ourselves and chill out is good for our mental health. How we choose to fill that space is up to us.

Here are some examples, including my own, of how people have decorated their living space to suit them. Maybe you can get some inspiration from these other JETs!

Laura Pollacco

(Kanagawa)



My apartment is a fairly recent build, a clean 1DK with white walls and floors. This was a great canvas to work with, and I quickly filled it up with many plants, white IKEA furniture, artwork to hang on the walls, and my fish! It's nice to have something at home that I am responsible for. I am also very into making things look stylised. I grew up in a well-decorated home back in the UK, and that sense of having things look well-designed is important to me. Having things fit together to create an overall look.

I could have gone with many different styles, but I want my space to feel natural and uncluttered, which helps me feel calm. My life here is so busy that coming back to a well-maintained apartment is mentally beneficial for me. I am really proud of my home and what I have made of it.

Caitlin Frunk

(Recent Hyogo JET alumnus)



When I first moved into my house here in Japan, it was furnished with a lot of furniture left by my predecessor that wasn't to my taste. I sold most of it within my first few months and packed away what would fit in my cupboards. Adding artwork, plants, new curtains, and a rug instantly made my house feel like a home. Small and inexpensive changes like this can completely transform the feel of a space. I brought art prints with me and found frames in recycle shops and ¥100 yen stores. Even if you are only planning to stay for one year, I encourage you to bring what you need to make you feel at home.

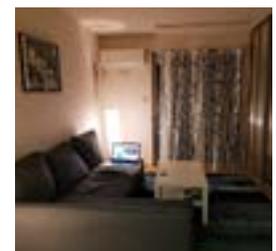
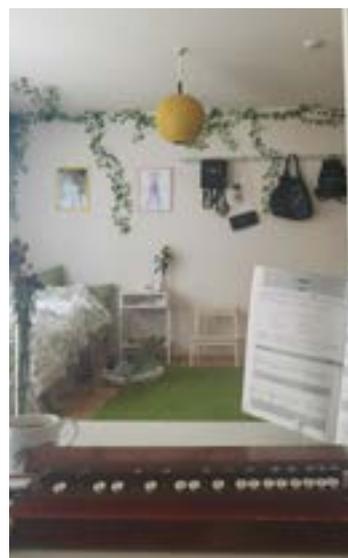


Maria Morales

(Tokyo)

I spent months carefully planning my apartment's decor. It would have been easy to just buy whatever was near me and cheap, but I wanted a home that felt carefully curated. I spray-painted my light fixture a sun yellow and waited patiently to purchase the perfect shade of couch that also turned into a massive bed for friends to sleep over on. Everything in my home was purposefully bought and placed to give me a garden feel in my bedroom and a calm, modern feel in my living room. Every room in my apartment actually has a color theme.

Living in a foreign country can be fun and exciting but also overwhelming. I needed a place I could take safe harbor in on the days I just wanted to be a hermit.



Before



After



Kelly Williams (Hokkaido)

Moving to another country and having to pack, sell, or give away almost everything you own is a daunting challenge. My housing situation was quite good in many respects and not so much in others. I have a massive three bedroom apartment that can be a lot to keep up with. When I moved here, there were belongings from two of my predecessors, including an old musty couch and footrest, mismatched curtains, first attempts at making furniture, and a few things that were actually nice.

The first thing I did was clear the house out. My apartment was soon emptied, and I had to start almost from scratch. As I made my purchases, I kept utility in mind as my main concept. How much satisfaction and use could I get out of things within the short time span of being on JET? I was also concerned with how I would handle Hokkaido's winter. My first major purchase was my couch. It was a bit expensive, but I fell in love with it the first time I sat on it. I then set about buying things that would provide a sense of warmth, comfort, and cheer. I wanted my house to welcome me in, no matter the weather.

I think making our new place a home is one of the most important things we JETs can do to make ourselves happier. Additionally, what we buy will enrich not only ourselves but also our successors.

Every Orientation is Different: Notes from the Keio Plaza

Nash Sibanda (Ibaraki)

A note from the Section Editor: This is not exactly how this section will be constituted in the future. I'm keen to include more longer-form writing, but this section will return to its more traditional purview of cultural events and reflections. This essay is, in parts, a self-introduction, a reflection of the desire to remind ourselves that we only experience Japanese culture through the lens of our wider life experiences, and a way to give myself some time to get properly online and reconnected with the world. Your patience is greatly appreciated at this time, and any reflections that you might have about the orientation process would be received with great interest!

It's Monday, August 13th, and entire floors of the hotel's South and Main towers wake up well before 5 a.m. Jet lag has beset Group B, an occupational hazard we all knew to expect but were still unable to fully prepare for. As with the heat and humidity that washed over us in the pick-up area outside Narita airport as we waited for the bus, Japan seemed dead set on spotlighting just how unprepared we might be for this.

The last plane-load of Brits arrived in Shinjuku around 9 p.m. on Sunday night after an arduous (and now partially infamous) indirect flight on Qatar Airways via Doha. Some of us had the energy to go out and explore the neighborhood around the Keio Plaza, but most retired to our hotel rooms to

remind ourselves what it felt like to sleep horizontally in an actual bed and to hopefully recuperate before Post-Arrival Orientation properly began the next morning. Up to that point, JET had been an entirely British phenomenon; despite the Program drawing participants from all around the English-speaking world, we had only so far met fellow travelers from Sheffield, Bristol, London, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and other all-too-familiar cities from home. JET didn't quite feel real yet.

I met my first American JET in the elevator. He introduced himself to me and told me he was from Hawaii. He looked it, with beach blond hair, board shorts, and an all-too-white, easy grin that betrayed what must have been

a far more restful sleep than I'd achieved. I felt embarrassed to be already suited and booted for the day ahead, a feeling that was compounded by my being slightly berated by another Qatar Airways passenger on the lowest floor of the hotel whilst queuing for *konbini* snacks and soft drinks. There was a sense that we were slightly over-eager to bow appropriately, to offer a full-throated *arigatou gozaimasu* to the shop clerks who served us, to valiantly attempt to understand whatever it was they said to us during our brief interactions.

Post-Arrival Orientation was a surreal experience that turned the Keio Plaza from what must usually be a lovely, full-featured hotel into some combination of a company retreat and budget cruise liner. The

company retreat sensation sprung forth from the cascading throngs of people, all dressed to impress, meandering from banquet halls to conference rooms with name tags on their shirts, documents in their hands, and passports in their inside jacket pockets. The cruise liner sensation was borne of the fact that, from dawn to dusk, all events were contained within the building, and although you could look outside and see the Tokyo skyline stretch out into all directions, you never quite felt that you were part of it. We'd come here to upend our lives and relocate fulsomely to a distant country, yet our first experience of it was distinctly Westernized hotel comfort and a bevy of Anglophones, all with no clue what their lives were going to be like from that moment onwards.

Jetlag afflicted people differently. Most had flown an exorbitant number of hours and had crossed at least six time zones. Most were waking up too early after having slept too little, but the excitement and nerves accompanying the whole new JET experience may have had a significant part to play in that. At breakfast I met a number of New Zealanders, who were only three hours behind their native time zones and seemed decidedly fresher for it. In the conversation that ensued, they seemed to take pity on me and my English roommates, and we engaged in the kind of conversation that happens a thousand times at Orientation: where are you from, where are you going, do you have LINE, I want to visit everyone's prefectures, obligatory JETlag joke.

The Opening Ceremony made things feel more real. Beside me sat two more Americans, including one who was making a list of all the interesting people he met at Orientation and the places they were going. The other was

an Oregon native, one of many that all seemed to be heading to Shikoku, where a Little Oregon will undoubtedly be springing up in the next year or two. Together we watched as representatives from myriad Japanese government agencies and ministries stood and gave speeches about the virtues of JET and the footsteps we were to be following in. As each representative stood to approach the lectern and then returned to their seats as they finished, a small squad of hotel staff performed a dance behind them, pouring glasses of water and pulling out chairs as the speechmakers generally ignored their presence. The whole day's presentations were characterized by JET's effusive attempt to prepare us as best it could for the work and life that we were about to embark upon, whilst being unable to completely account for the unavoidable fact that every one of us was destined to have experiences, problems, challenges and triumphs that were uniquely our own, unprecedented, and impossible to account for. From the perspective of a JET applicant waiting to hear about results from interviews, placements and predecessors, the recurring mantra of Every Situation Is Different feels like a bad joke, a cop out that current and former JETs use to avoid having to give valuable information to the newbies. Yet it is a necessary obfuscation since the only expectation that is sure to be valuable and accurate is to expect the unexpected – a cliché that, to this author's mind, seems even more infuriating than ESID.

The Keio Plaza's air conditioning system made heroic efforts to maintain a comfortable temperature throughout the hotel for the duration of Orientation, yet the system could only stretch so far. The crowd that congregated in Concord Hall for speeches and

presentations stretching from the morning well into mid-afternoon was, evidently, too large to be entirely accommodated. The room became ever warmer. Strategically placed breaks throughout proceedings did little to provide any respite from the amount of body heat radiating from the massed JETs. Even a momentary wander outside the hotel revealed that the actual temperatures in Japan during August were decidedly higher than those inside, with humidity compounding the entire experience; yet we were perhaps still too new, too tired, too unacclimated. The UK had experienced one of the, if not *the*, hottest summers on its record, but we still could not have foreseen the Japanese summer (incidentally also hottest on its national record). Even those who had travelled to Japan and other humid climates during the height of summer before had not done so in suits, neckties, and dress shoes. On Sunday night, after arriving at the hotel, the first thing we were told was to beware the high temperatures, to drink fluids, and to know that suddenly losing consciousness from the heat was undesirable but not unheard of. Typhoon 13 was approaching from the sea, but the prospect of lowered temperatures made many of us cautiously optimistic.

The smoking rooms on the second and third floors of the hotel quickly became a reliable social gathering point for the nicotine addicted amongst us. Unlike the throng of the full JET contingent, here one could expect to frequently see familiar faces, to have conversations that extended beyond the rapid-fire Orientation introductions, and to bemoan the heat. The smokers were a diverse bunch, including another Oregonian headed for Shikoku, Americans headed for even hotter climes of Mie and

Osaka, two Brits headed for Hyogo, and some JETs from smaller participating countries in continental Europe. The concept of smoking rooms in themselves were a novelty for most; rather than stepping outside to light up, one had to withdraw deeper into the bowels of a building to find the small, sparsely decorated rooms populated with fellow smokers, puffing away in silence (that is, silence unless they were the Keio Plaza JETs).

The day proceeded like this, culminating in the Welcome Reception, where another squad of hotel staff performed the miraculous feat of getting a drink into the hands of a thousand JETs scattered around Concord. We were grouped together with our various prefectural partners and had a valuable opportunity to meet more of each other. We saw faces and learned names that would likely form the basis for vital and strong friendships for the months and years to come. JETs who were worried that they would be the only ALTs in their town discovered new people who were moving into apartments and houses just down the road. The introductory conversations took on a new urgency, a sense that they had moved beyond mere pleasantries towards a more necessary act.

Throughout the day, the sensation of having one foot in and one foot out of Japan persisted. We all knew full well that we were in Tokyo, yet the day's events had largely been presided over by English speakers, attended exclusively by English speakers, and even catered with Western food for breakfast and lunch. Beyond a few of the presentations, the presence of Japanese people throughout the day had largely been in the background; the capable and effective team of

stewards from both JET and the Keio staff ensured that everything ran smoothly, that we were always where we were meant to be, and that we felt their presence as unobtrusively as possible. The way we flitted through Keio with nary a communication problem amongst us, we might have been forgiven for thinking that the dire state of English language acquisition in Japan was overstated.

Wherever new JETs congregated within Keio Plaza, they expressed concerns about their upcoming work. Certainly, some of the JETs headed to schools known for their strong ability in English expressed concerns about the advanced level of teaching that might be expected from them, particularly those with limited or no teaching experience. People wondered whether their supervisors would like them and if they'd like their supervisors in return. Some had no idea how many schools they would be teaching in or whether they needed to invest in cars and commuting train tickets. Some had no idea where they would be living, how much furniture they needed, or how they would get mobile phone numbers and home internet.

An undercurrent of apprehension wormed its way beneath the eagerness and the excitement. The fates had already conspired against Group B the day before when a systemwide failure at the airport resulted in almost none of the incoming JETs being given Residence Cards. This stroke of fate set us up for all kinds of issues that we could not yet even imagine. Rumors of JETs that had decided it was too much and were heading back home to familiarity, comfort, family, and an absence of ubiquitous *kanji* had already begun to spread. What had started as an application

form and a statement of purpose almost a year ago had turned into a thousand disparate lives packed into suitcases, flown to Japan to be scattered amongst 47 prefectures, thousands of schools, and millions of interactions with students and teachers. JET was starting to feel real. It was happening all around us; we could feel it in the heat.

After the reception, people dispersed into the night, towards drinks, karaoke, meals, reunions with Japanese friends, and aimless wandering amongst the bright lights. Over twenty waking hours later, I lay in bed in my air-conditioned hotel room talking with my one of my roommates, a much more sensible man than me heading further north on Honshu. He told me about how his wife became interested in Japan before he did and how she brought him around to see the country with the same kind of wonder our fellow JETs were experiencing. I told him about my obsession with ramen and my hope to get better at speaking the language. He's not sure what he'll do after JET, and neither am I. We both hope that the time we spend here will help to bring those future plans into clearer focus and that we'll find out more about ourselves, what we like, and who we are. Sometimes it's difficult to know everything it is that JET wants from its participants, but we both agreed that it wants us to fall in love with Japan. I think we're both ready to do that.



In July 2016, *Pokémon Go* began to sweep the world (1). This augmented reality (AR) game became a hit not just with longtime Pokémon fans but also with a wider audience. Everyone with a smartphone could suddenly capture Pokémon around their neighborhoods. What wasn't to love? But what started as Pokémon mania soon dissolved as accessibility and software issues prevented some from getting the most out of their experience. Yet the game continued on, evolving and retaining niche groups of fans.

Nearly two years later, Niantic has finally incorporated a trading system. Furthermore, November will bring the release of *Let's Go: Pikachu!* and *Let's Go: Eevee!* More than just remakes of the original Kanto region, this Nintendo Switch game will make it possible to live out your Pokémon journey both outside and from the comfort of your own home. But are these expansions enough to offset the criticisms *Pokémon Go* has faced to date? Our JET gaming community breaks it down for us.

The Bad

"*Pokémon Go* turned me off early on. There were a lot of features missing, and despite being a casual game, it actively prevents you from playing it casually by virtue of draining your battery. They also prevented you from playing it on public transport. Now, even though they've added features, I feel like I'm too far behind to catch up."

– **Elliot Mark**

"I was playing until my phone stopped working with the PoGo Plus button once the phone was locked. After that stopped working, I stopped playing because of battery drain and not wanting to constantly walk with my phone out. If I get my PoGo Plus to work again, I'd play for sure."

– **Kyle Tobin**

"One big complaint is the cost of the Go Plus. The game was killing my battery, so I decided to try it out despite swearing I'd never spend that much money on it, particularly since I live in the countryside and have a tiny fraction of the stops, gyms, and Pokémon I'd find in an actual city. Ended up losing it during the winter, and I'm not paying another ¥4,000 to replace it. It's kind of convenient but not ¥4,000 convenient."

– **Renee Hayse-Porter**

Battery life seems to be one of the biggest issues people had with the game. This could be fixed with PoGo Plus, a Bluetooth device that notifies you when Pokémon are nearby (2). However, losing or breaking the device renders the game virtually unplayable, and the cost associated with getting a new one may not be worth it to everyone.

Renee brings up another problem with accessibility for rural locations, and she isn't alone.





"I used to play a lot when it first released, but I lived near and used to work in New York, so I had extremely easy access to all the features that make the game work. I even had a pokestop in my bedroom, so I was never not full of pokeballs. But now that I live in the middle of nowhere, I've completely stopped playing. It's just not worth the data to have to drive five minutes to get to my closest pokestop. I might pick it back up when I find myself back in an urban hub, though."

– **Samantha Bronster**

"Village places tend to have nothing in the vicinity. Stops are concentrated in city centers."

– **Rumena Naychevska**

"I found it very difficult to enjoy. It was hard to get caught up in the hype since it came out so much later in Japan than America that it felt like all my friends back home had stopped playing it. When I actually got my hands on it, I saw why: it was boring as heck! It was also pretty difficult to play in a rural area."

– **Robert Panther O'Neil**

"Yeah, playing in a small town is still rough. You'd think that being in a small town surrounded with tall grass (instead of concrete cities) would make it easier."

– **Bryan Campbell**

Lastly, there are mixed feelings about the features. Some, like Elliot Mark, feel that the new features have made the game too complex to return to after a long break.

"I carried on playing for about a year but stopped basically once gen 2 came out. I just lost interest, and all the extra features look a little confusing to just pick up again."

– **Beth Lawrence**

Others feel like the features are oversimplified, and there is disappointment in how little *Pokémon Go* resembles the original series we all know and love.

"I played a lot when it first came out, but I got bored pretty fast with its catching and battle system. I guess I was expecting a traditional Pokémon game on mobile where, instead of guiding a character through a premade world, you walk around the real world to find, battle, and catch Pokémon and challenge other trainers to battles. The whole flicking and tapping just didn't do it for me."

– **Brandon Han**

"I stopped playing because it became too repetitive. Battles are awkward and boring. The new gym system was loads better than the original, but raids were impossible in a small town. The devs came out and said that only 10% of

"The gym battle mechanics were also terrible. Why they didn't use, or stick close to, the tried and true system the core games have used for two decades has always baffled me."

– **Jonathan Edwards**

the features they planned were actually in the game on launch day. However, I felt it took them way too long to release new features. When you look at other microtransaction games, they have major updates every few weeks to keep players engaged. *Pokémon Go* had..... Pokémon." – **Jon Slabaugh**

The Good

Despite these issues, *Pokémon Go* has continued to keep some people engaged since launch. In fact, Marc Mundy's opinion of the game has done a full 180 since its launch. At the start, he felt much like those who commented above.

“So, I was super excited and played *Pokémon Go* for about the first two weeks when the servers opened up in Japan. However, I stopped soon after because certain aspects of the game such as finding Pokémon (which they have altered multiple times) and also a lack in variety of Pokémon in my case made the game feel incomplete, painful, and lacking. The whole thing with strong players just “stacking” Pokémon at gyms made battling a turn off for me as well.”

He, like many others, left the game due to these frustrations. However, with the new features and especially the new games coming out for the Switch, he felt it was time to give it another try.

“Skip ahead roughly two years, I actually recently downloaded the game again after seeing the *Let's Go!* announcements. The game in its current state feels like a much better experience. A much wider variety in Pokémon, better design decisions between how gym battles work, introducing raid battles. Admittedly, I haven't done many raid battles because I started over from scratch and as a result have relatively weak Pokémon (climbing out of the level 20s is painful, can't imagine the 30s). However, the idea of working together with friends/a group of unknown people all towards the common goal of defeating/capturing a Pokémon is really cool. Adding friends, sending gifts, and trading are really cool, but I can't really say it's something I have been able to take full advantage of yet.

“Honestly, for me personally, the wider variety of Pokémon and adjustments to gym battles (as well as more pokestops and gyms being placed in my small city) have been some of my biggest motivating factors to play day-to-day since I started again. I like walking around and seeing a wide variety of Pokémon to catch. My most recent struggle even being that I will sometimes run out of pokeballs with all of the Pokémon that are out now. Oh! Field Research has also been a really nice touch.

“I can't say how long my interest will last this time around, but for the time being I like how the game feels overall, especially when compared to its state when it first came out.” — **Marc Mundy**

For those who have kept up with it since launch or those looking to pick it back up in anticipation of *Let's Go*, the game is still doing what it's best at: getting people exploring their local areas and bringing players together.

"I started playing *Pokémon Go* with the beta here in Japan. Still playing now, even if I'm not a hardcore player. I had been playing *Ingress* (and still am), *Pokémon Go*'s previous game by Niantic, so I wanted to see the differences. *Pokémon Go* is more active on some points as you can find Pokémon everywhere, not only near pokestops. I just wish there was a chat system as in *Ingress*.... But there are online communities, even here in Japan. Nagoya has people meeting every month."

– **Patrick Loyer**

"I am not a huge Pokémon fan but I do love collecting and love walking around. Living in a city that felt increasingly oppressive, the game was a good motivator to go out. It helped me explore my city too, and I suddenly started noticing there are more people with similar interests than I could previously detect. It's one of those games that depend on the people around you. A bunch of people in suits on their lunch break trying to win an Articuno raid. A shop putting a lure on a nearby Pokémon stop for their customers. Strangers telling you they've spotted a rare Pokémon. I'm glad they have been adding more Pokémon. Great that they made gyms pokestops as well. Glad for trading and gifts."

– **Rumena Naychevska**

And for some, the people they meet in the game are a part of their lives forever.

"I started playing *Pokémon Go* when I arrived in Japan. I couldn't play in America because I owned a windows phone. I would play every night after school, walking 4-6 miles a night. It was a major factor in losing over 100 lbs. in my first year and a half in Japan. I also met the most beautiful and intelligent woman in the world, who eventually became my wife. The game continues to add features that bring players together and does not look to be slowing down. It's hard to make friends in a foreign country, but it's hard not to when you are playing *Pokémon Go*. I don't currently play now, but it opened up my world, which for a majority of my life was cold and isolated. As for *Let's Go! Pikachu/Eevee*, I will also be interested in playing because it was such a big part of my childhood and my adulthood as well."

– **Cody McGuire**

Let's Go, Game Freak!

Pokémon Go has certainly faced its challenges. From battery drain to faulty battling systems, this AR game has lifted the idealistic veil on what Pokémon in real life could look like. But it has also kept many people engaged since launch, motivating them to meet new people, get active, and garner a new appreciation for local spots. Most importantly, it has paved the way for a whole new frontier of gaming. The more obstacles Niantic overcomes, the better chance we have at seeing more successful AR games in the future.

With *Let's Go*, even more limits will be tested as the console world collides with mobile devices in a way never quite seen before. But will we see a repeat of *Pokémon Go*'s booming start followed by fading interest? It all depends on Game Freak. If done right, Game Freak could please their oldest fans with the opportunity to explore Kanto with friends, and they could appeal to the *Pokémon Go* players still grouping up for raids and battling their way to Pokémon mastery. If done poorly, Nintendo, Game Freak, and Niantic all stand to lose. Only November will tell.

There is one piece of good news for all JET gamers looking to invest in Pokémon in the future. Whether you are a fan of *Pokémon Go* and plan to dive headfirst into the *Let's Go* spin-offs or you are holding out for that core RPG release in 2019 (3), Nintendo Switch is region-free (4). You can start your Pokémon journey here in Japan, and you don't have to lose your progress after returning home. This is great considering that, with all the new Pokémon across multiple platforms, the "Gotta Catch 'em All" mission could easily take a lifetime.

JET Gaming Enjoy! is a group "for all JETs who are into pressing X to not die, rolling 20-sided die, and making other fools die... in the virtual arena." All comments mentioned above were gathered from this lovely bunch of individuals. If you are a new JET looking for other gamers in your area, this is a great place to start!

Sources:

- (1)<https://bit.ly/2LJKUKW>
- (2)<https://bit.ly/2LJLIVA>
- (3)<https://bit.ly/2omT3vw>
- (4)<https://bit.ly/2Mt1SSV>

BEAT SABER

TRAIN LIKE A JEDI

Marius Izak Aucamp

It's hard to describe the overwhelming feeling of joy when playing *Beat Saber*. It's so much more than just your standard rhythm game. Firstly, it's designed for virtual reality (VR). For those that have never tried putting on a VR headset, the experience is really unique. It feels like you are a part of the game's artificial world. In a game designed to get you active like *Beat Saber*, the sensation that the environment around you is real inspires you to push your body to limits you might not otherwise.

Secondly, this game is a lot like the world famous *Guitar Hero*—but with *lightsabers*. As blocks approach you, you are meant to slash them. Sometimes the game even controls which direction you have to hit the blocks, really making it feel like you are training in the way of the Force. If you want a challenge (or you just aspire to be Darth Maul), you can modify your controllers to create a double light saber (1). Complete a song on expert like this, and you'd be ready to audition for the next Star Wars movie.

I actually bought the Steam VR system because I was so eager to try *Beat Saber* when it came out. During my first time playing, all I could think was “wow, wow, wow.” It was the most fun I've had with a video game in my entire life. I felt like I was in a new world, slicing beats and doing moves like a real Jedi. It's not just that that makes it great, though. The music and choreography of the music beats is amazing. And, surprisingly, *Beat Saber* also doesn't require a lot of space to play. You can set it up in about a 3x3 meter area. So invite your friends or family over and get slashing!

For those looking for a workout, this game won't let you down. After playing, I felt like I had gotten the same level of exercise as jogging or doing Zumba. The game also has difficulty settings, so people of all ages or activity levels can benefit from it (2). As I became better at the game, I decided to up the difficulty and play a faster song. I was exhausted after just a few rounds!

Of course, there are still some cons. I noticed that the VR headset can become a bit foggy and sweaty

if you play for a while. Also, VR technology is still pretty expensive at the moment even though the games can be quite affordable. The last thing is that *Beat Saber* is really new, which can be a pro or a con depending on your gaming preferences. There are still a lot of kinks to work out with the game, such as level customization. Right now, a lot of the custom settings you can see online come from an active modding community (3). If you are someone who has never modded a game before, you may not get to do everything you see from players' stream videos. On the other hand, if you are someone who likes engaging with other players and editing games to make them better for everyone, *Beat Saber* will satisfy!

That doesn't mean the game in its basic form is unplayable, though. Far from it. At this time, the game has ten songs, and one of the best ways to play with friends is “party mode,” where you can pass the headset back and forth between songs without hassle (4,5). I have heard you can also play with others online, but I haven't tried that out yet. I am sure it will be lots of fun, though! A real-time competitive multiplayer setting is also in development (5).

Despite being so new, this game has already become extremely popular among VR enthusiasts. I believe VR gaming is something that will only increase in the future, and unique games like this are setting the tone for that future. Maybe it's your turn to embrace VR with this game! Though a release date hasn't been set yet, it will be coming to PlayStation VR as well. (6) So, if you want to have fun, get some exercise, and live out your childhood dream of becoming a Jedi, try *Beat Saber*! I promise you won't be disappointed.

A longtime gamer and entrepreneur, I have been inspired by the ability of games to connect people from across continents. Since my fiancé became a JET, I have visited Japan several times, and I hope this article gives expats there another way to break down language barriers and have fun!

Sources

(1) <https://bit.ly/2oqMw38>

(2) <https://bit.ly/2MCoUH4>

(3) <https://bit.ly/2N0x1gd>

(4) <https://bit.ly/2orjeBk>

(5) <https://bit.ly/2wzhEky>

(6) <https://bit.ly/2wyrJOx>

SEPTEMBER RELEASES

Sarah White (Fukui)

GAMES

4 Sept.

- Destiny 2: Forsaken (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- Genesis: Alpha One (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- Claws of Furry (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Planet Alpha (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)
- Moonfall Ultimate (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

7 Sept.

- Marvel's Spider-Man (PS4)
- NBA Live 19 (PS4, Xbox One)
- Immortal: Unchained (PC, PS4, Xbox One)

14 Sept.

- Shadow of the Tomb Raider (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- NHL 19 (PS4, Xbox One)
- Xenoblade Chronicles 2: Torna – The Golden Country DLC (Switch)

18 Sept.

- Fishing Sim World (PC, PS4, Xbox One)
- The Bard's Tale 4: Barrow's Deep (PC)

21 Sept.

- Spyro Reignited Trilogy (PS4, Xbox One)
- Xenoblade Chronicles 2: Torna – The Golden Country standalone

25 Sept.

- Valkyria Chronicles 4 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

27 Sept.

- Life is Strange 2 (PC, PS4, Xbox One)

29 Sept.

- FIFA 19 (PC, PS4, Xbox One, Switch)

MOVIES

7 Sept.

- The Meg (2018)
- Breathe (2017)
- Please Stand By (2017)

14 Sept.

- The Predator (2018)
- Christopher Robin (2018)

15 Sept.

- Regression (2015)

21 Sept.

- Skyscraper (2018)
- The Nun (2018)

22 Sept.

- Operation Red Sea (2018)

28 Sept.

- A Quiet Place (2018)
- Crazy Rich Asians (2018)

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<https://imdb.to/2PiCSee>

<https://bit.ly/2LlzneF>

Photo: Hermes Rivera on Unsplash

A Word From the Art Section Editor: On Newness

Tayla-Paige van Sittert (Kumamoto)

Things can all seem the same for so long, but in the blink of an eye they can also seem so new.

The very fabric of life is made up of many instances of new, and these changing moments are what give us life. Think about it; if a shark stood (swam?) still for too long, it would cease to go on living. It needs to move into newness every moment to keep itself alive. The same with us; for example, the cells in multiple parts of our bodies renew themselves over time so that every seven years our bodies are remade.

This possibility of change is not only on the invisible, physical level; newness comes in many shapes and forms. One can change their mind to make new again what has always been the same. You can walk your usual way but turn your head in a new direction and see something else. You can sit at the same desk but change your posture and feel a different way.

Or you can move into a much bigger instance of new. Such as all of us new JETs moving halfway across the world, opening new bank accounts, making new friends, and setting up new homes and work environments. The Art Section for *CONNECT* is also new, and I am new to the section. So much is and can be so new, and I would like to pay tribute to the possibility of this newness. It is relieving and empowering, and nothing would exist without it.

We welcome the new artists among us as well: the voyeurs and celebrators, adventurers and capturers of all things new. Thank you.

If you feel like Japan is pretty much the same as home, I urge you to change your perspective, the direction you're looking in, or the posture you assume, so that you can experience the magic of new.

Dan Cook on Unsplash



Chasing the feeling of being small

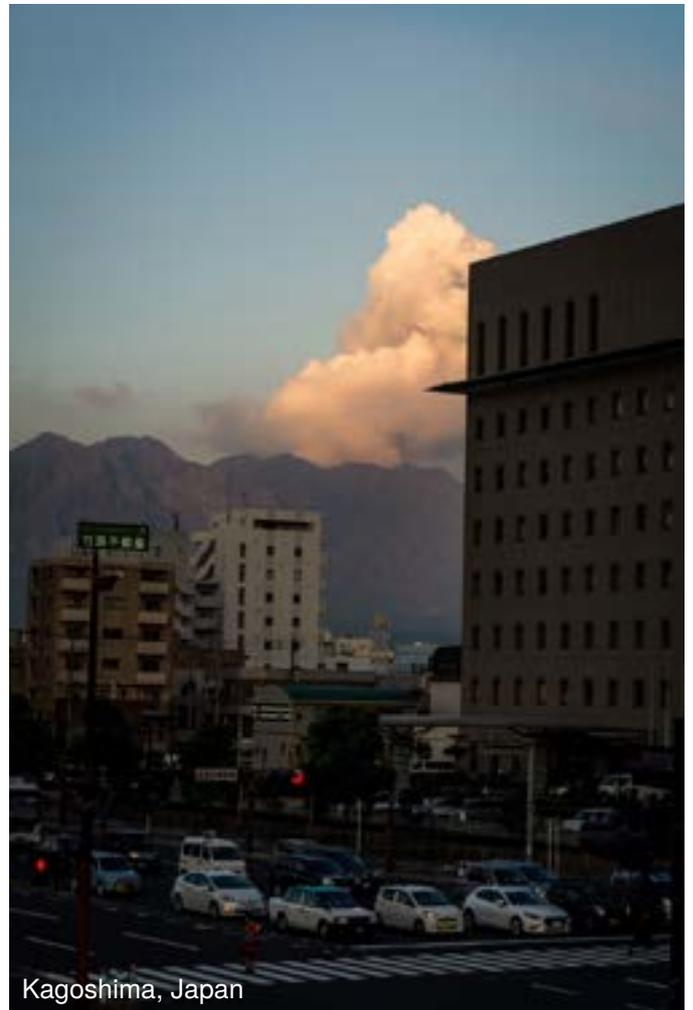
Annene Maré (Kagoshima-shi)

It was extremely hot on the Sunday that I joined a few other ALTs to explore Mt. Shiroyama. Because it was one of those days where you avoid exercise as much as you can, we decided to take the bus to the top of the mountain. Unfortunately we got off at the wrong stop, which meant that we had to hike up the mountain for about one km. I know one km doesn't sound too far, but it was a real struggle in this heat.

At the top, it felt like I was overheating, and we quickly got some ice cream to cool down. After we finished the ice cream and started the short walk to the viewpoint, the friendliest woman waved at me to come over, rushing behind her stall to fetch something. She appeared with a whole bucket of ice and gave it to us with the biggest smile. I wanted to burst into tears. I was so grateful. So far, It's been one of the highlights of my move to Japan!

I arrived in Kagoshima City on Wednesday, the 1st of August. I stared out the window and saw this beautiful city surrounded by nature, and I knew that it was where I was meant to be. Thus, I've used my time here to discover what it has to offer.

After settling in, I spent my first few days slowly getting to know the city. Watching an erupting Mt. Sakurajima was just mind blowing. In Kagoshima, you have this vibrant city with the nicest people, but you also have beautiful mountains and nature areas. I couldn't have asked for better.





Kotsuki River, Kagoshima, Japan



Kagoshima, Japan



Cape Town, South Africa



Cape Town, South Africa

Kotsuki River is only about a 5-minute walk from my apartment, which means that it's where I'll be spending most of my afternoons. Shiroyama Park is a little bit further but also a great escape! I can't wait to explore the rest of Kagoshima!

Annene is an adventurer and photographer from South Africa. They're a true master of capturing immense landscapes in tiny frames and showing us the elusive sublimity of feeling small.

Check out more of Annene's work on [Instagram](#) ([@adventure_annene](#)) or on their [website](#).

「MI感 3 0 0 0」 AND 「MZTM」

Samu Boyne (Higashihiroshima)

As a Mexican-American artist, I had a lot of exposure to diversity from a young age, and naturally this created an interest in exploring multiculturalism through my art. I hope to share this awareness through my art and design projects.

With the intention of reimagining conceptual fashion design, these two works explore a ground-up design process in which the clothing was designed and made with specific models already in mind. Taking inspiration from futuristic fashion themes often seen in Japan, I planned for these two designs to combine handmade elements with simple shapes.

「mi感3000」 aims to combine warm weather and cold weather clothing, as well as warm and cool colors, in order to create a lukewarm temperature in one garment.



The concept behind 「MZTM」 is to create playfulness through polka dots (*mizutama*) made with children's fabric paint and to incorporate that into a modernistic, white set-up.



Take a scroll through Samu's [Instagram](#) ([@chamu.boy](#)) for more of their fantastical fashion and art projects.

APOLLO'S DREAM

Carlos Ncube AKA NoLIFE Chronos (Nagasaki)

Mysteries are calcified ignorance,
Holding the unknown that exists as answers to questions apprehension
detains.

The mind conceives the impossible

Reality impregnates reality,

And delusions are born.

In unworldly forms...

like a flat earth and sea monsters in swarms.

Knowledge is knowing to explore these waters that Poseidon guides,

Between clouds and the stars in a tin can that glides.

Icarus descending into Amaterasu's brush strokes.

Assumed symmetry with asymmetric synergy,

I am in,

Unfamiliar territory,

An archipelago birthcanal,

The said mother of sunrise.





My name is Carlos Ncube. I am a writer from South Africa, currently based in Kawatana, Nagasaki as a JET Programme participant. I studied media and politics at University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg – a city with a skyline that’s just as famous as the statesman President Nelson Mandela.

I write poems, raps, short stories, and essays. Before JET, I was a music journalist for Music In Africa. In 2012, I won the award for Best Newcomer at the WordnSound Poetry League and Poet of the Year in 2013.

*The subject matter in my poems includes existentialism, politics, magical realism, and sometimes the obscurity found in Salvador Dali’s **The Persistence of Memory**. My performances are high energy, minimalist, and emotionally charged.*

You can get in touch with Carlos on Instagram: [@nolife_chronos](https://www.instagram.com/nolife_chronos)



LIFESTYLE

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Amanda Muller

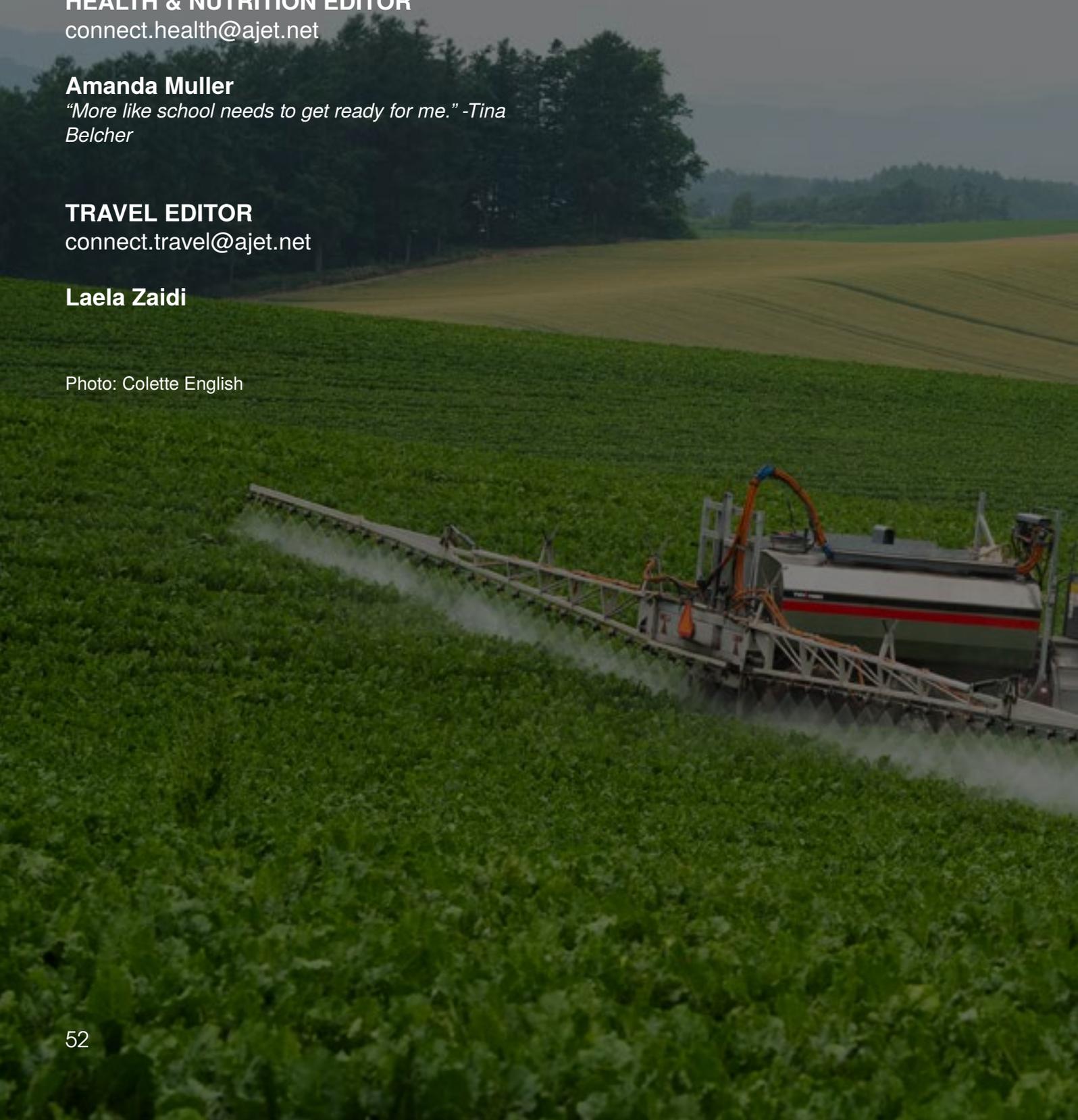
"More like school needs to get ready for me." -Tina Belcher

TRAVEL EDITOR

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Laela Zaidi

Photo: Colette English





Staying

The Signs and Symptoms

Julianne Streeter (Kōchi)

The weather in Japan this past year has been harsh for many of us - following heavy rain were high temperatures and humidity. While some JETs may have experience in their home countries with unrelenting heat, others do not. We should all be mindful of the dangers of hot temperatures.

The main risks involved with the high temperatures are *heat exhaustion* and its deadly sibling *heat stroke*. It's best to know the differences and warning signs of these two medical conditions to ensure you have the best Japanese summer you can.

Heat Exhaustion

Heat exhaustion occurs when your body has a prolonged exposure to high temperatures and humidity (often in combination with strenuous physical activity).

Symptoms include:

- Heavy sweating
- Rapid pulse
- Dizziness
- Fatigue
- Cool, moist skin
- Muscle cramps
- Nausea and headache

Heat Stroke

If untreated, heat exhaustion can develop into heat stroke. If this happens, you must call 119 for medical help. Heat stroke is deadly if left untreated.

Please look for:

- Altered mental state or behaviour
- Body has stopped sweating
- Nausea and vomiting
- Flushed skin
- Rapid breathing and racing heart rate
- Body temperature over 104F (40C)
- Loss of consciousness



g Cool: ms of Heat Exhaustion

Photo: Colette English

If you begin to feel the warning signs of heat exhaustion there are things you can do to prevent it from escalating into a medical emergency.

- 1.** Get out of the heat. Go inside, turn on your air conditioner, use a fan or have a friend use a fan for you, use cold compresses, take a cold shower, or wash your body with cold water from a sink or hose.
- 2.** Rehydrate. Any cool, non-alcoholic and non-carbonated beverage will be great. Drinking a sports drink will also help replenish salt and other nutrients your body has lost while sweating.
- 3.** Rest. Avoid strenuous activities for the next few days, even when you start feeling better. Your body is at a higher risk of developing heat exhaustion again in the days following an attack.
- 4.** If you do have a headache, it is fine to use acetaminophen (Tylenol) to help with this. Avoid doing this on an empty stomach, and consume liquid.

With weather conditions becoming more and more extreme these past few years, it stands to reason that we're in for a brutally hot summer. This Canadian girl will be doing her best to avoid outdoor activities in the middle of the day, and will be applying generous amounts of sunscreen when she does venture outdoors.

Stay cool everyone!

FIVE YEARS WITHOUT A/C:

A UNICORN'S GUIDE TO HEAT SURVIVAL

Cassie Conrad (Miyazaki)

"So I noticed you didn't have an air conditioner listed with the appliances you're selling."

"That's right. We don't have one."

"What's that like?"

"It's a bit hot sometimes, but we get by just keeping the windows open and using fans. We used to have a dehumidifier but it wasn't effective enough for the whole apartment so we sold it."

"Oh, I see."

In 2013 I arrived in the southernmost city of Miyazaki Prefecture. During Tokyo Orientation we were told to wear suit jackets when we first met representatives from our schools. However, it was so unbelievably hot that I chose to wear an almost sleeveless shirt underneath. So when I met my principal and he said to me, "Aren't you hot? Why don't you take off your jacket?" all I could do was smile, pretend to be fine and count the minutes until I could go home.

But then I got home. "Oh, yeah," I thought, "no air conditioning." Even after tossing the suit jacket on the floor and changing into the lightest clothes I had, there was no escape from the 100 degree temperatures (F) of that summer. It would remain that way for the next five years with each summer progressively getting worse than the one before.

So how did I keep cool? By being creative and otherwise just following common sense.

VENTILATION IS KEY

I was fortunate enough to have an apartment with many windows and with *fusuma* instead of thick, wooden interior doors. To open up the apartment as much as possible I stored the fusama in a closet and kept the windows open pretty much 24/7. To supplement this, I got fans. I strategically placed them around the rooms to encourage airflow. Just that little bit of cross-breeze improved things immensely.

Unfortunately, not everyone is lucky enough to have as many windows as I did. However, there are still ways to encourage a cross-breeze despite this. I knew some ALTs who had bought a screen to put on their front door. They could then open up the front door on one side of the house and a window or balcony door on the other side for airflow, but still keep bugs and other unwanted critters out. These screens can get a little pricey but ultimately are much cheaper than an A/C in the long run.

Photo: Radu Florin

BLOCK OUT THE SUN

I love my daily dose of vitamin D as much as the next person. However, having windows on three sides of my house combined with the direction my building faced meant that despite having a great cross-breeze, the sun would shine directly into my apartment in both the early morning and afternoon, making it feel like a greenhouse.

The obvious thing to do was keep the curtains closed to block out the sun. For maximum effect, either thick, room-darkening curtains or a double layer work best. Neutral colors also seem to be better. I had a set of pink curtains in one room and cream colored ones in another, and the pink-curtained room was still significantly warmer.

“But if you close the curtains, how do you encourage air flow?” you ask. Good question. Even just closing one of the two curtains on any given window is helpful. I’ve also played around with tying up the bottoms so the upper half of the window is covered while the bottom is open. More often than not I was just lazy and left them as they were and it was *still* an improvement compared to the greenhouse my room would have been otherwise. You just have to play around to find what’s best for your space.

UNPLUG

I know, I know. We all love our Netflix, but that TV monitor is heating up your apartment like crazy. Avoiding using TV until the sun goes down definitely helps keep the place cooler during the day. The same goes for lights, lamps and computers. While I certainly can’t say that I *never* watched TV during the day, I did make sure not to leave any extraneous lights on and tended to make do with one main light for the whole house.

In addition to keeping electricity usage to a minimum, you should also check that you are using energy-efficient lightbulbs. Not only will they save you money, but they also don’t burn as hot.

DOWNSIDES

The main downside to dealing with heat was that keeping the windows open allowed the humidity in. I used desiccants in every dresser drawer, closet, clothes rack, cabinet or other storage receptacle, which effectively prevented my stuff from getting moldy. The living areas however, still had room for improvement.

To be honest, I don’t really have any perfect advice for this. I mostly just had to pick and choose which enemy I wanted to deal with on a given day. I kept desiccants out when the windows were closed (like on rainy or not-quite-so-boiling days), and the drop in humidity made the heat significantly more tolerable. Yet sometimes, if

WATER AND ICE

My apartment would be so hot that the tap water was naturally lukewarm. I didn’t even need to turn on the heat for the shower. So I always kept a pitcher of water in the fridge and a stash of ice in my freezer for extra-cold drinks. I also kept all those little ice packs you get when you buy frozen things from certain stores and used them to help cool down after a long day.

When you want a quick fix, I found that targeting your wrists, lower back and the back of your neck will cool you down pretty quickly. I also had these really neat gel freezer packs with cloth coverings designed so you could wear them around your neck. I often wore them around the house and when it was too hot to sleep comfortably because they would stay in place on their own.

MINIMIZE

This isn’t a strategy I used, but just a suggestion based on an observation I had at the end of my time here.

Throughout my five years in Japan, I accumulated a lot of stuff. All that stuff not only fills up rooms and blocks airflow but it also retains heat. Even my glass and ceramic dishes would be warm to the touch on very hot days. Having a cabinet full of dishes retaining heat contributed towards a very warm kitchen, which only became worse if I decided to cook.

Once I cleared out a lot of stuff in preparation to move home, I noticed my apartment felt a lot less... stuffy. Now, I’m not saying to get rid of your stuff, but keeping things stored away in closets or in a storage shed (if you have one) can help.

the temperature was finally bearable but it was raining, I’d opt to deal with the increased humidity in exchange for not living in an oven.

Life without A/C *can* be done if necessary. It won’t be pleasant, but it won’t be too horrible either. While they weren’t a perfect fix, these methods certainly did improve the situation, and here I am five years later, not a puddle of goo. Having said that, if you have the resources then I’d *highly* recommend getting an air conditioner. I made it through all five years without one, but given the option I certainly wouldn’t go through it again!



Cold Lunch: Quinoa Salad

Anette Dundas (Hokkaido)

In the summer heat, sometimes you don't want to spend hours in front of a hot stove cooking a warm meal. This quinoa salad requires minimum stove time and is served cold to keep you cool during the sweltering summer months.

This recipe is low FODMAP, gluten-free, low on lactose, vegetarian, and can be adapted to a vegan diet if the cheese is substituted or removed totally.

Serves 2-3

- 4 dl cooked quinoa (chilled)
- ½ bell pepper
- ¼ cucumber
- 4 radishes
- ¼ honey melon
- 6 cherry tomatoes
- 1 tablespoon of fresh mint
- 75 g of feta cheese

Vinaigrette:

- 2 tablespoons of good olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- Fresh lemon juice

Method:

Cut peppers, cucumbers, radishes, honey melon and cherry tomatoes into small cubes. Finely chop the mint. Have all the ingredients in a bowl and mix in the olive oil. Add squeezed lemon juice, and season to your preference with salt and pepper.

If eating for lunch, make the vinaigrette in a separate tub to avoid the salad becoming soggy. I usually do 50/50 lemon/oil and add freshly ground pepper to it with only a pinch of salt.



Voluntourism in Ehime

What to Know Before Arriving

Sara Katsura (Ehime)

When heavy rain warnings in Ehime were reported in early July, no one had any idea of what was to come. Several days of heavy rain continued, and as morning broke on July 7th, the Hiji River burst its banks. Over the next few hours and days, I was horrified to see what was happening to my beloved Ehime, a prefecture that is affectionately known as the Love Princess.

The damage in Western Japan is widespread and devastating. In southern Ehime, almost every township has been affected by flooding or subsequent landslides. Within the prefecture, thousands of people fled their homes, and 25 people died. Many homes and businesses were destroyed.

Even a few weeks out from the disaster, many people are still without running water. Most roads are now reopened, but the rail line down to Uwajima is still not operating. In some places where water has been restored, the water doesn't smell quite right. With temperatures soaring in the mid-30s and high humidity, you can only imagine the smell of the debris left in the wake of the flooding. One woman told me her car was flooded, but because tow trucks and wreckers are in high demand, the wet car is left sitting to rot in the hot sun. But, despite the heartbreaking losses, people here are remarkably positive and proactive.

The Disaster Volunteer Centers have been set up in the affected towns and run efficient schedules. Volunteers sign up for insurance, are given an orientation, and then are put to work wherever help is needed that day. The three-day weekend following the flooding saw thousands of volunteers descend on Ozu, Nomura and Yoshida to lend a helping hand. However, more work still needs to be done.

The heat wave that followed the flooding has meant everyone is on high alert for *necchusho* (heat stroke). Volunteers are advised to bring about two litres of drinking water each day, wear long sleeves and long pants, wear dust masks and goggles, have sun protection, and to bring a health insurance card. The work includes removing ruined furniture and household items, mud removal, cleaning shops and homes, and clearing up rocks. The volunteer centers welcome anyone of any age and any ability. It does help if you can speak some Japanese although it is not a requirement. If you can't speak Japanese, it would be good idea to team up with a friend who can.

Volunteers coming from out of the area will need to secure their own accommodation and transportation to the volunteer centers. Be aware that accommodation is limited here, as many hotels and ryokans are being used for people who have lost their homes and for Self-Defense Forces troops. However, there are a few volunteer groups that are currently recruiting people and provide shared accommodation for a small fee.

When volunteering in the areas, it is important to be respectful of the local people. Remember not to take photos of people or their homes and belongings. One ALT volunteer advises people to be considerate when helping to clear out homes, particularly in regards to religious or spiritual items. Ask the homeowners before throwing away anything that looks important.

The "Ehime Disaster Relief and Community Building Info Exchange Network" group on Facebook has been established for sharing information in English. Volunteers can share their experiences and advice. Fundraising drives have been highlighted, and links to volunteering information have been posted.

In the wake of this disaster, it has been heartwarming to see the outpouring of support from people both within the local communities and further afield. Former and soon-to-be JETs from all around the world have been reaching out with messages of support and offers of donations. New friendships and connections have been forged and old relationships reignited. With all the love and encouragement it has received, I can only believe that the Love Princess will gather together all her resources and move forward.

Sara was an ALT in Seijo, Ehime from 2004-2009 and now works directly for her BOE. She was quickly welcomed into her small town in Ehime, and ever since she has been introducing Kiwi culture to the locals. In between taking care of her family and teaching English, she can often be found running a trampoline class or looking for a bag of salt and vinegar chips.

source: <https://bit.ly/2KQJluo>

Photo: Gina Whitney



TRAVEL APPS AND WEBSITES: *A GUIDE FOR NEWLY-ARRIVED JETS*

WELCOME TO JAPAN!

Verushka Aucamp (Fukui)

Congratulations on getting into the JET Programme. On JET, you are afforded the chance to travel extensively in one of the most unique countries in the world. To help you maximise your travel experiences here, we've put together a guide on apps and websites that you may find useful. Some may be familiar, and some may be brand new to you—it's worth checking out those that pique your interest and fit your needs.

Our must-know recommendations are: Doot (*Food*), Stay Japan (*Accommodation*), and Kousokubus (*Transport*).

FOOD EXPERIENCES

DOOT: This is an awesome way to meet locals and discover overlooked food options. The platform connects you with local residents who introduce you to great food and immerse you into local social life. The success of this platform is in its emphasis on “local secrets.” Locals typically take users to restaurants that do not have an online presence. The sign up process online is easy: Once you’ve filled in your food interests and meal budget, you simply link up with locals on the platform, and they take care of the rest. As a bonus, you don’t need to be a tourist to use the app; you can use Doot regularly in your placement city. You can even register as a local yourself once you’re familiar enough with the hole-in-the-wall restaurants in your area! We’ve been told that Doot is expanding through demand of its platform. What this means is that even if Doot is currently unavailable in your region, you should create a profile, list your location, and get your friends to sign up in order to get your area on the map! The cost is 500 yen per person, paid directly to the local. You pay for your own food.

Visit the website on desktop or mobile, as the mobile app is coming soon.

EATWITH: Similar to Doot, this platform connects you to locals but offers a more formal food and dining experience. Experiences through EatWith come along with a hefty price tag, 4,000-11,000 yen per person, but include sake pairings, food market tours, or cooking classes! Although this app is not affordable enough to use frequently, it is worth considering when you have visitors. When you use EatWith, other tourists will be joining the experience with you, and the platform’s presence is mostly in Tokyo. EatWith can be found online and in app stores.

ACCOMMODATION

STAY JAPAN: Consider this the homegrown version of AirBnB with more local-style options (e.g. farmstays, traditional housing, minshuku, homestay, etc). Upon joining, you’re prompted to claim your 10,000 yen credit. This is an epic way to find exactly what you want very quickly. It’s more versatile than other accommodation options and in the same price range!

AIRBNB: With a global presence, this platform is likely the one you’re most familiar with. AirBnB has had its share of spotlight over the past year due to regulatory changes in Japan. The app allows you to stay in local residents’ homes instead of more formal establishments. Sometimes you’ll stay in a spare room, and other times you’ll have the place to yourself. Its versatility and competitive prices make it a strong contender for finding accommodation, especially when booking on your phone through the app (albeit that the availability has dipped recently). If you have never used AirBNB before, have a friend send you a referral link, or find one online so that you can obtain travel credit with your first booking (and your friend will receive credit too!).

AUTHENTIC VISIT JAPAN: This website is an interesting pick that we highly recommend if you’re looking for a more localized accommodation experience. Authentic Visit Japan (AVJ) provides information on accommodation in more rural communities, whether they’re seaside villages, agricultural communities, or mountain towns. The aim is to get involved in the community and take part in rural activities, such as fishing or forestry. Sometimes you can book through the website, and other times you will be given a link to the host’s website or contact information. AVJ is great for an immersive experience for an extended period of time.

COUCHSURFING: This website allows you to stay with someone for free—literally on their couch or in a spare room. It can be harder to find hosts, so research a spot far in advance. This is also a nice way to meet locals, but be warned that hosts can be hit or miss!

TRANSPORT

KOUSOKUBUS: This is a lifesaver for a budget traveler. Unlike other bus booking companies, it's cheaper, offers more frequent routes, and higher quality. Other bus companies became popular among foreigners because they were among the first to offer English support, but Kousoku now books in English too. Their services include day buses and overnight buses, and with the buses on offer, you usually have your own, individual seat. There are three seats in each row, each separated by an aisle. Buses are equipped with reclining chairs, charging ports, WiFi, and sometimes a privacy curtain for your entire seat. The buses stop multiple times for a duration of 15 minutes to buy snacks or go to the bathroom. Forget the other options and book with Kousoku. We wish we found them sooner!

JETSTAR AND PEACH AVIATION:

The go-to budget airlines for Japan. Enough said.

EXCURSIONS

AIRBNB EXPERIENCES: This has everything including workshops, art classes, food tasting, bike rides, sports, local concerts, social impact causes, surfing, and a lot more. Its diversity and reach across Japan is unmatched and certainly has something for everyone. As expected, the price tags can be quite hefty, averaging around 5,000-9,000 yen per person. AirBNB experiences offer a worthy excursion to do on occasion for yourself or when you have visitors.

LOKAFY: This platform connects you with locals who take you on local tours. You have to know exactly when and where you want to take a tour, and your request is sent to the website which will then match you with a guide. Alternatively, you can scroll through the set guides and choose one that matches your interests (photography, hiking, etc). The minimum tour time is two hours, and prices start at around 7,000 yen. Lokafy is a nice option to consider if you have limited time and want to explore quickly!



Verushka is from South Africa but later relocated to Australia. She has been living in Japan for the past year. She is interested in conversations about digital cultures, sustainable tourism, and Mac Miller's new album. She can be contacted at verushka88@icloud.com.

Photo: Kirsty Broderick

SHIRAISHI-JIMA: A TRAVEL DIARY

Remi Wyszynski (Kyoto Prefecture)

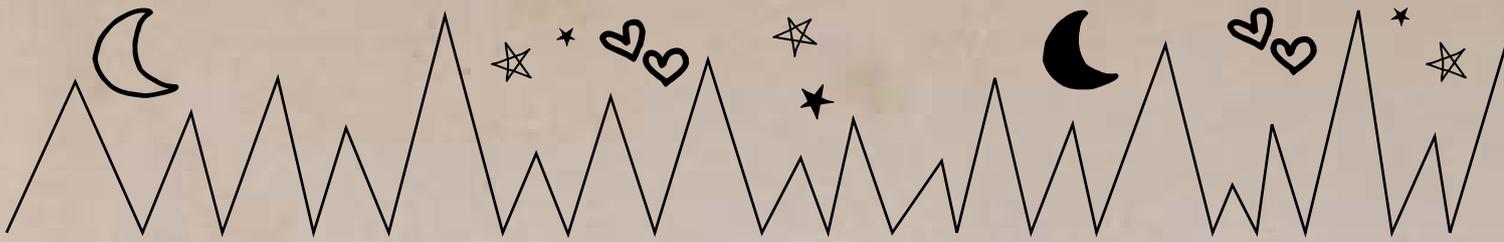
The mugginess of June, even at mid-morning, glues my clothes to my skin as I stand outside the small train station of Kasaoka-shi in Okayama Prefecture. The handful of people who departed the train with me slowly disperse between the buildings of this quiet town. Looking around, I spot the blue sign with a boat on it directing me towards the docks. The black tar road amplifies the heat and makes me wish for a cold drink; I hope the walk isn't too far. There are few other signs past the first one, and I make a wrong turn or two but eventually arrive at the ferry docks just as I begin to feel rivulets of sweat trickle down my back. Where the concrete meets the wood of the dock stands a white building containing seats for waiting passengers and, most importantly, air-conditioning.

Soon the ferry for my destination, Shiraishi Island (Y菜嶼), arrives, and I line up to buy my ticket at the window. After a short and messy back-and-forth conversation in Japanese with the clerk, I get my ticket. As I walk down to the ferry, a sea breeze carries faint notes of seaweed and salt my way. Above me, a seagull squawks in the cloudless blue sky while everyone shuffles onto the boat and finds a seat to ride out the half hour trip.

I'm startled awake by the horn announcing our arrival into the port of Shiraishi. The island is small but mountainous, with trees scaling up the sides of every natural surface. The ferry slows down and enters the crescent harbor artificially created with seawalls to protect against any waves during storms. A collection of small houses frame the harbor, none the same but each with a variation on traditional Japanese architecture. The captain expertly docks the craft, and the crew hops out with large mooring lines to keep us in place. Walking up the pontoon to the road, I see my host, Amy. A longtime resident of



Photo: Gina Whitney



Shiraishi, she is chatting with her fellow residents of the island and greets everyone who steps off the ferry with a warm smile. She spots me and waves me over to introduce me to this community.

The island has a population of around 500, most of whom are elderly, and still manages to host a school for their fewer than 10 children. A small, white Toyota truck with black spots painted across its surface waits behind Amy. Amy tells me it is called the “Moooo! truck,” a cute name that is part of her business’s brand. After tossing my bag in the bed, we head off. The road winds around the edge of the island, providing views of the sea on one side and a cliff wall on the other. Set into the cliff wall, just as we round the bend, is what I later learned to be a Jizo statue—one of the 88 which make up the island’s pilgrimage trail. Shortly after, the cliff gives way to houses and a crescent-shaped beach. We stop at the Moooo! Bar and House where I will be staying.

The only thing separating the houses and businesses from the beach is the one lane road that snakes around the island. The sand closest to the road is white and fine. The slightest breeze picks up the sand and blows it into the genkan of the house. Near the water, the sand becomes more compact and coarser. Although the beach is level at first, it gradually begins to slope downwards towards the water, steepening once it’s closer to the sea. Down the beach and to the right, there is a small island less than fifteen meters out. The tide is low, exposing the tops of the rocks. People cross over these rocks during the summer solstice Benten festival so that they may pray and leave offerings of sake at its shrine. Down the right side of the beach, the sand

meets the mountain. My eyes climb up the forested cliffside towards a clearing where a single Torii gate sits, staring impassively at the bay.

For now, all is peaceful and quiet, but Obon will see waves of tourists coming to take advantage of the beach. Some JETs from surrounding prefectures also make the trip to enjoy the western atmosphere of the Moooo! Bar. Occasionally someone will come for the hiking trails and the pilgrimage. Those are usually left alone in favor of the water on these hot days.

Back across the road, the Moooo! House sits in front of a hill nestled between two of the island’s many mountain peaks. A twisting path crests the smooth hilltop where markers for the departed stand in the island’s cemetery. I climb up this path to make it to the only grocery store. From this view, I’m able to better survey the rest of Shiraishi. Opposite the side of the beach, a tree canopy stretches out across the valley, occupying the center of the island. Like their own small islands in the sea of leaves are the houses and roads of the town and the omnipresent Japanese vegetable gardens. A deep breath mixes an earthy, jungly smoothness with the sharp saltiness of the sea.

Still, the sun is hot, and I have time. Exploration can wait for other days that are less punishingly exhausting. The Moooo! Bar’s cool sand floor is always shaded by a roof of tinted Plexiglas. There are no walls to stop the breeze that plays with the heat of my skin, eventually absconding altogether. It is a true beach bar, perfect for these hot days. In contrast, the Moooo! House is a traditional Japanese





house with tatami floors and sliding shoji doors. The back of the house opens onto a small garden with a rock path that leads back around to the front.

It is not until a few days later, after constant torrential rain, that it's cool enough to hike around the island. A path maintained by locals jogs up and down the peaks which make up the island's crown of mountains. Halfway up the first peak, clouds form, and a light *potsu potsu* rain shower begins to fall. Each drop on my face and arms washes away some sweat from the hike but leaves me wishing for an actual shower. At the top, I find a boulder with a ladder carved into it. I climb up and decide to sit down for a break and watch the clouds flit past me. When they clear, the valley and the smaller clouds rising from the trees become exposed. I have heard many times that trees breathe, but this is the first time seeing it for myself. As I sit and watch, the small puffs slowly turn into wisps, rising to join their big brothers.

I continue around the island making an almost full circuit before I go down into the valley, finding myself in a bamboo forest. Above me, there is nothing but the stalks and leaves intertwining, hiding the sky. Down beneath my feet are dead bamboo leaves, a bit damp from the rain. The leaves have a noise cancelling effect and swallow the sound of my footsteps, creating a tranquil atmosphere punctuated only by the still-living leaves rustling in the wind. This forest is a world apart; even the chorus of insects usually so present in summer is absent. If I could sleep here, I would, but my water bottle is empty, and I am hungry from the hike.

Making my way back to the Moooo! House from the bamboo forest is confusing. The houses are clustered together with only small paths between them, winding and twisting away. Stretching my arms out, I can almost touch the walls on either side of the road. Listening for any motorbikes, usually heard before they are seen around the tight corners, I admire the houses around me. They are built in a traditional Japanese style with stone walls around them and heavy shingles adorning the roofs. The walls on many are blackened from pre-burning, acting as a fire retardant. Finally, I make it to the top of cemetery hill. There I pause to drink in the view of the beach and watch the sun descend ahead of me to rest on the other side of Honshu. With it, my last day on Shiraishi comes to an end, but I know that it won't be the last time I am here. There is so much more to explore.

Remi is a second-year prefectural JET in Kyoto. Growing up living and traveling on a sailboat has instilled in him an urge to visit new places. One of his goals is to explore one off- the-beaten location during each school vacation.



COMMUNITY



COMMUNITY EDITOR

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Lena Pham

But where's my Zairyu card?

SPORTS EDITOR

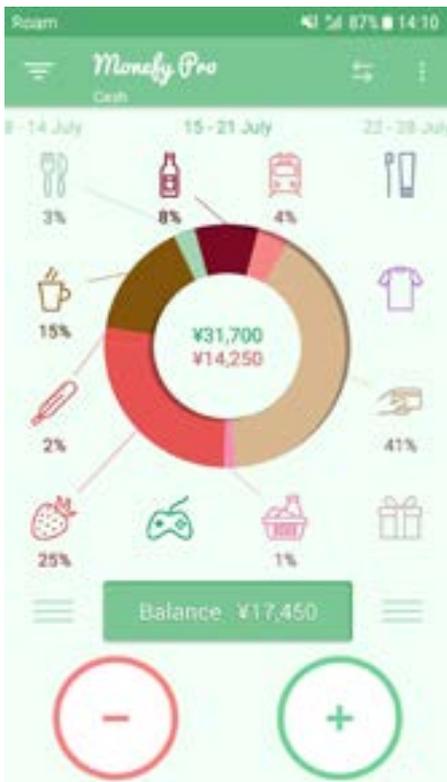
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Photo: Gina Whitney



Budgeting on Your First Year on JET

Diego Velasco (Tokyo)



Learning how to manage money is one of the most important skills you can pick up while living here in Japan. For those of you early in your adult life, this will become an important skill that will stick with you and improve your quality of life in the future. For those of you at a later and more advanced stage, it doesn't hurt to review what you know or to learn a few new tricks. Below, I will go over four important steps you can take to learn how to budget, as well as advice on how to get your spending, and thus your life, under control. Let's begin!

1. Set a goal.

Ever make money only to end up wondering where it has all gone? I know I have, and so have many others. Knowing where our money is going is the key to financial security, and so being able to answer the question of "where has it all gone to?" should be high up on our list of problems to solve. So, my suggestion is this: to come up with a goal that you will strive for during your time on JET. Let me tell you why.

Before I came to Japan, I was broke and in debt. I wanted to change my predicament, so I came up with a number for how much money I wanted to have saved before leaving the program. That number was \$10,000 USD. Having that goal in mind gave me something to strive for, something to look forward to that was amazing and worth feeling accomplished for, even if I had no plans for what to do with the money afterwards.

As a result of this motivation and practicing some of the suggestions you'll read about here, I eventually hit my target sometime after my first year. My bank book had never looked prettier!

However, your goal may be different. For those of you with student loans or heavy bills to pay, your number may instead be a calculation of how much debt you want to pay off each month or in a year. Either way, having a goal in mind will bring purpose and order to your budgeting process. If you have no clear sense of what you want, your money won't either. As a result, it is important to know what you'll be spending money on *before* you get it so that you can use it more efficiently, which will bring you happiness and security in the long run. In other words, no more panicking about where it's all going because you'll know!

2. Find out how much you want to spend on stuff/things.

Another thing I did before I came to Japan was read some of the most important finance books ever written (For example: *The Millionaire Next Door*, *The Total Money Makeover*, and *The Richest Man in Babylon*). I felt as if I needed to in order to reach my goal of \$10,000 USD (a number that seemed daunting to someone like me, who never had more than a couple hundred stored away). Within one of those books was a discussion on how much of a person's salary should go towards their apartment or home. The answer was this: 30%.

Now, you don't have to take this number at face value, but let's sculpt an imaginary monthly budget for a first year JET who believes in this 30% rule and see what we can learn:

A JET with a monthly salary of ¥280,000 that spends 30% of their income on housing will spend ¥84,000 a month (a very high and unlikely amount for most JETs but let's pretend).

That leaves a whopping 70% of their income still at their disposal.

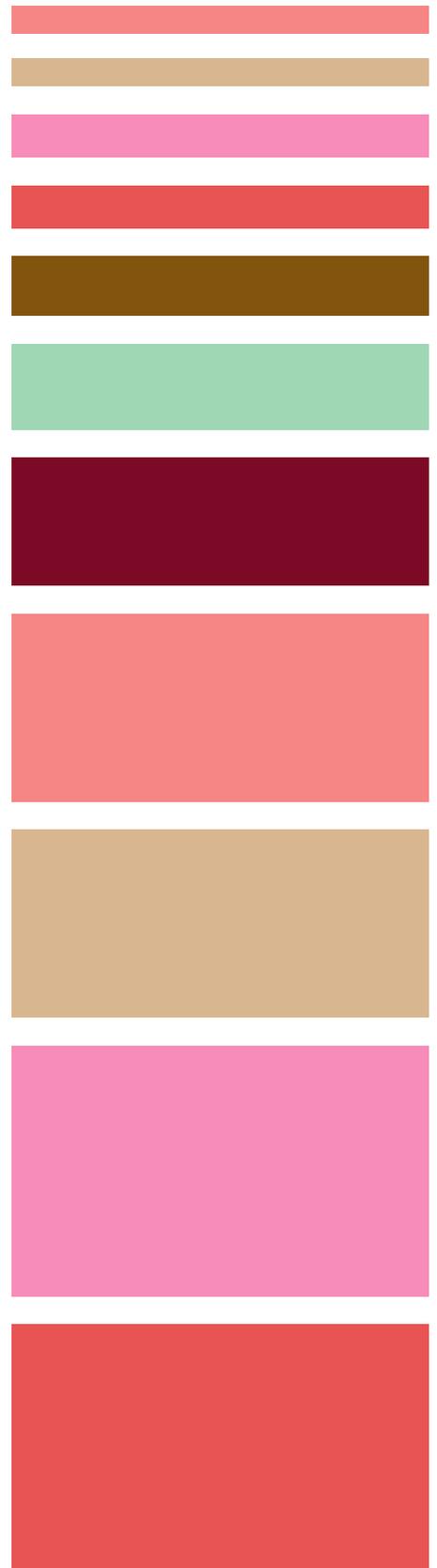
Presumably, this imaginary JET will need to eat, drink and bathe, so let's add a budget for living expenses. For the sake of simplicity, let's say they allocate another 30% of their income to this. As a result, they can now spend ¥84,000 a month on themselves!

Now, let's also say this JET has a large debt, and from the 40% that remains, they want to work toward

the goal of paying it off. Once again they allocate 30%.

Finally, the JET anticipates that they will have to pay fees or taxes associated with their new life in Japan. They allocate the final 10% to this. Thus, they reach a 3/3/3/1 ratio or 30/30/30/10 percent plan for their monthly paycheck. If this JET were to then implement this plan, they would most likely live a very comfortable life, with roughly 2/3rds of their income going towards that purpose! Furthermore, they'd be making serious progress towards the goal of paying off their bills. Not too shabby right?

Of course, no one's budget will look this simple. Your budget may very well look completely different and that's alright. After all, you might find that saving 30% of your monthly income is too unnecessary or spending 30% of your income on housing is too high or that you want 50% of your income for boozing! A budget that will accomplish your goals is what's best for you, which is why it's important to have them! As a result of the personal nature of a budget, step number two can take a while to get right. But the advantage is that once you do, the next time you find yourself at a *nomikai* (an after work party with co-workers) and they're all amped up and ready for the *nijikai* (an after-after party), you'll know whether you can or can't afford to party like there is no tomorrow.



3. Stick to the plan.

After the difficult task of making a plan comes the equally difficult task of executing said plan. How you will get yourself to stay on task will depend on you. But I can offer some suggestions based on what has worked for me.

First, I recommend keeping records of your finances. GoogleSheets is free if you have a Gmail account, and if you've never used a spreadsheet before, don't panic, neither had I. Luckily, this program has a "monthly budget" template all prepped up and ready to go! Of course, you can make your own spreadsheet from scratch because the goal is simple: to have a record of how much money is coming in, how much is being allocated where, and whether you are or are not staying on target. Initially, I used this method to keep daily records of what I was spending money on. Admittedly, this was a very tiring thing to do, and I kept this habit up for at least six months before switching the frequency to once a week. By the end of my 2nd year, the only time I needed to look at my spreadsheet was on payday just to see what my allocations for the month were

going to be. As daily tracking of expenses is cumbersome, perhaps a better, more convenient way of tracking them is with an app. Personally, I recommend Monefy. With Monefy's simple UI, it takes mere seconds to log your income or record an expense. Plus, you'll have the ability to categorize expenses (by labeling them as food, transportation, entertainment, etc.), giving you a better idea of what it is you're spending money on.

Second, adopt a system for organizing money. What I personally used is called the envelope system. It's fairly simple. At the start of every month (payday), you slip the appropriate amount of money into an envelope that has been labelled "food," "rent" etc. These labels should reflect the categories you determined in step two. That way, rather than pull money out of your bank account every time you need cash, or pool all of your money together, which can make it real messy to keep track of, it is all neatly divvied up and easily identifiable from the start.

4. Review and adjust

Learning how to budget takes time and effort. It is a growing process that changes as you change. Luckily, the principles we learn and the discipline we develop stay with us long after we've moved on to our next job. As a result, while it is important to never give up and stick to your budget, it is also important to know that life just kind of happens sometimes. So one month you may unexpectedly fail, but then

there will be a month where you will underspend and be extra flush with cash. It's all part of the process. Just be reasonable with yourself and your goals and keep a watchful eye on your finances. Have periods where you review and adjust your plans so that the budget you are working towards is the right one for you.

Happy Budgeting Everyone.

Diego is a Tokyo JET and a 27-year-old avid fan of Doctor Who and politics. As a result, he either writes fanfics or essays, depending on his mood. He also doesn't have a strong social media presence, though he does maintain a Twitter specifically to practice his Japanese. You can follow him there if you have any questions about his essays or the delicious foods he eats. TwitterID; @DiegoV_jp

The Circle of JET Life

Kyle Belanger (Shizuoka)

Summer is starting to come to a close now, and in Japan this means the start of the second trimester of school, the last festivals finishing up and the most beloved bug (the cicada) is out in full force. For JETs, however, this is often either the beginning or the end

since something close to half of the active JETs across Japan end their contracts each year. Around now, the retiring veterans are likely either already back in their home country or will soon be leaving. Meanwhile the fresh, starry-eyed JETs are anxious for their first classes to start and are looking forward to their first paycheck so they can eat something other than instant ramen again. This leaves those of us who opted to stick around (just one more year, I swear) sad to have lost some friends, but excited to show more people what we enjoy about Japan and to form new friendships. We are the senpai now, and there is some responsibility that comes with that.



For newcomers, it can be rough to navigate your way around Japan. Even the seasoned JETs struggle from time to time. Fortunately, our schools will typically help us with the basics, and if you're lucky, your supervisor may be willing to drive you around to get some furniture. However, your school isn't the only place you can turn to for help. JET is a renowned contracting organization for numerous reasons, but perhaps one reason that is most often overlooked is how it supports its community, both during and after their time in the program. While we are in Japan, we have access to a close-knit community across the country. If you need some advice, someone will know what you're going through, because they've

experienced it themselves. If you want to know where to find a good onsen, everyone has at least one they can recommend. If you are looking to get out of the house, there is always something to do, be it in a group or otherwise, and all you have to do is ask. Should you not know where to look, in every prefecture, there is a local AJET committee that helps organize and plan events for both JETs and local community members. In addition, they help oversee any social media or website(s) affiliated with their area so that members can easily access information and contact each other with relative ease on those platforms. AJET events combined with the local outings of your “neighboring” JETs mean it’s never too long before something is going on.

As such, it is important that we don’t lock ourselves up at home all the time. It can be tempting to simply stay home where there is AC and heating, but it’s far too easy for that to become habitual. The less you go out, the harder it can be to catch wind of events and outings in your area. Organizations like AJET help provide us with some tools to get involved in our communities, and there is so much going on that it would be a waste to spend what little time we have in the JET Program at home. This isn’t to say you should never stay at home, however. Everyone needs some time to themselves, so it’s vital to find the right balance for you as we all adjust to a brand new way of life. The JET life, as it were.

Life on JET is pretty unique for countless reasons. For starters, we aren’t quite given the same workload as our Japanese counterparts, and we usually have a pretty good idea of how long we will be in an area. In addition, for ALTs, we arrive in the middle of the school year, where our other teachers will have already settled into their positions for the year. Even CIRs miss the main waves of typical hiring in the spring. Then, when we leave, we miss the main send-offs at the end of the school year and get slotted into a speech at the summer closing ceremony.

However, it is important to remember why we are here: to promote grass-roots internationalization at the local level. So for many people, it’s the send-off from the friends they’ve made in their time on the program that they look forward to. It’s the meeting of a retired Japanese woman who walks you across town to show you her family’s sweet shop that you’ll never forget. It’s the karaoke night with new friends because you

finally passed (or failed again) the JLPT, that you may not remember. And it’s giving advice to your successor so they can experience it all, like you did. The beginning and the end of our time in the program is often cut and dry, but the time between that is full of opportunities and such a wide variety of events, which is well represented by the unofficial JET slogan: “ESID” (every situation is different). As such, JET is a unique program, and the same can be said about the lifestyle. Not many will be able to relate to or understand our experiences, but another JET can always give a knowing nod as you regale them with your tall tale of “that time they actually understood what I was saying.”

With people constantly coming and going, every summer brings a different feeling to each area, so one area may be full of local partiers one year, then an area of independent travelers the next. There is a good mix of different people with various personalities and backgrounds on the JET Program, so it goes without saying that there’ll always be people you can mesh well with in your prefecture, if not your city. I’ve talked a lot about community in this article, but really, your community is what you make it. There is something for everyone, and if there’s something missing, it won’t be too difficult to get it started. Between other JETs and the Japanese people in your area, there will always be someone who would be happy to help you make the most of your time here, and more often than not, you’ll improve the lives of those living here too. So don’t be afraid to get out there, even if you don’t know the language, because a smile and nod will get you further than you’d imagine.

Kyle Belanger is a second year ALT from Michigan in the United States, living in Numazu, Shizuoka. Before coming to Japan, he graduated with a Bachelor’s in Psychology and Japanese from Oakland University. He was a Boy Scout for 13 years, and as such, he still enjoys the outdoors and getting involved in his community. His current hobbies are kyudo, hiking, biking, and playing video games. If you want to contact him, he is the current Vice President of Shizuoka AJET and can be reached either on the Shizuoka AJET Facebook page or the website.



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CONNECT is a magazine for the community in Japan, by the community in Japan. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! If you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors. We'll work with you to make it the best it can be and share it with our audience of thousands. Not every article needs to be an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, travelogues, and more.

Contact the Head Editor of *CONNECT*, Lauren Hill, at connect.editor@ajet.net with your submissions, comments, and questions.

ARTICLES

Write about something you're doing. Write about something you love. Tell us a story.

SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about someone in your community who's doing something neat and noteworthy. Cooks, collectors, calligraphers — we want to hear about the inspiring people around you.

COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and issuu.com.

PHOTOS

Members of the JET community contributed to the photos you see in this issue. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Ashley Hirasuna, at ashley.hirasuna@ajet.net.

HAIKU

Each month *CONNECT* will feature *haiku* from our readers. A *haiku* is simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your *haiku* along with your name and prefecture to connect.editor@ajet.net.

COMICS

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